

# HENRY IRVING



by Charles Hiatt.



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HENRY IRVING

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*Sir Henry Irving.*

*After the painting by Sir J. E. Millais, Bart., P.R.A.*

23 If

# HENRY IRVING

A RECORD AND REVIEW

BY

CHARLES HIATT

AUTHOR OF "ELLEN TERRY AND HER IMPERSONATIONS," ETC.



LONDON

GEORGE BELL AND SONS

1899





## P R E F A C E

I N the following pages I have tried to give a straightforward account of Sir Henry Irving's theatrical career, from the time of his first appearance at Sunderland in 1856 to the recent production of *Robespierre*. Although I avow myself a warm admirer of the actor, I have not hesitated to quote unfavourable as well as laudatory criticisms of his impersonations. It has been my endeavour faithfully to represent the attitude which critics of the most diverse schools have taken up in regard to his work. The opinions of Mr. Clement Scott and Mr. William Archer, of Mr. Joseph Knight and Mr. A. B. Walkley, will accordingly be found side by side. I have purposely dealt at greater length with the earlier part of Sir Henry's life than with its more recent incidents, which are within the knowledge of all play-goers. To the studies of Irving by Mr. Austin Brereton, Mr. Joseph Hatton, Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, and Mr. "Frederick Daly," I have made frequent reference. It is hoped that the reprint of the play-bills of the chief

productions at the Lyceum will be found useful to students of the Stage. The collection of play-bills at the British Museum unfortunately terminates abruptly about the year 1857, and, so far as I am aware, no attempt is being made to complete it. This state of things adds greatly to the difficulties of theatrical research.

The rooted objection of Sir Henry Irving to be photographed in character has made the adequate illustration of this volume by no means an easy matter. To his good nature, and to the kindly advice of Mr. Bram Stoker and Mr. Charles Howson, the presence of not a few of the pictures which adorn these pages is due. Some of them are already familiar to the public, but others are now published for the first time. A list of the artists and owners of copyright who have laid me under obligations would, however carefully compiled, almost certainly contain serious omissions. I hope, therefore, that those whose names would be included in such a list will acquit me of intentional discourtesy or ingratitude. The cover of the book has been specially designed by Mr. Gordon Craig.

CHARLES HIATT,

LONDON,

*October, 1899.*

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# HENRY IRVING

## A RECORD AND REVIEW

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### CHAPTER I

#### CHILDHOOD

1838—1849

AN overwhelming number of the greater lights of the English Stage have been born in London or its immediate vicinity. Nearly every part of the metropolis has contributed a star more or less brilliant to the theatrical firmament. Richard Burbage, the most conspicuous of the players of the time of Elizabeth, was a native of Shoreditch; while his contemporary, Edward Alleyn, whose distinction as an actor is somewhat overshadowed by his fame as a philanthropist, was born in St. Botolph's. To the parish of Westminster we owe Thomas Betterton and several other players, who, though undoubtedly persons of certain importance in their day, cannot be compared with that great tragedian—for he, according to Anthony Aston, "ought to be recorded with the same respect as Roscius among the Romans." From Covent Garden came



James Quin ; Pall Mall is represented by Mrs. Oldfield ; John Henderson was born near Cheapside, and Charles Matthews in the Strand. The birth of a remarkable group of players took place in Bloomsbury and its neighbourhood, amongst whom were Colley Cibber, Robert William Elliston, and William Charles Macready, the last of whom first saw the light in Mary Street (now part of Stanhope Street), Euston Road. To this goodly list of Londoners must be added the names of Junius Brutus Booth and Edmund Kean. Such players as have been born in the provinces seem, as might be expected, to have come from the towns rather than the countryside. John Philip Kemble was born at Prescott, in Lancashire, and his sister, Sarah Siddons, of majestic and austere memory, came into this world at the Shoulder of Mutton public-house at Brecon. Her father, Roger Kemble, was born not far away, at Hereford, a city very conspicuous in theatrical history, for Garrick and Nell Gwyn were likewise born there, the former at the Angel Inn, and the latter in Pipe Lane, which has been re-christened Gwyn Street in the lady's honour. Condover, a wonderfully picturesque village in the adjoining county of Salop, was the birth-place of Dick Tarleton, the Elizabethan clown and player. Passing from the west-midland to the south-western counties, we find Samuel Foote among the celebrities of Cornwall, and Samuel Phelps among the worthies of Devon.

The neighbouring county of Somerset holds an exceptional place in the history of the English Stage, because the city of Bath is included within its borders. The annals of the Bath Stage are second in importance only to those of the London Stage itself. The theatrical

story of the former city begins in the dim and distant days of Mysteries, Miracles, and Moralities, and the ancient town is also in evidence during the period of strolling players and primitive play-houses. It is possible that Shakespeare himself visited Bath in the year 1593 : it is at all events certain that the company of actors of which he was a member was there at that time. It was not until 1705 that the first regular theatre was built in Bath ; and perhaps this would be more accurately described as a mere play-room, for it was small in size, and appointed on the meanest scale. In 1738 even this poor place was demolished, and for a time the Drama found a home in various assembly-rooms and similar makeshift quarters. A new theatre was, however, built by subscription, and opened in 1750 ; and eighteen years after, George III. granted letters patent, under which the Bath Theatre became a Theatre Royal. The patent secured for the play-house a similar position to that of Drury Lane and Covent Garden. The Bath Theatre thenceforth was brilliantly successful, and its stage was graced by the appearance, at one time or another, of almost every English actor of high repute. A glance at the pages of Genest, or, indeed, of any of the theatrical chroniclers of the last century, will show what a splendid part the Theatre Royal, Bath, has played in the history of the English Stage. But if the dramatic associations of Somerset crowd round Bath, no small measure of distinction must be allowed to the village of Keinton, for there the representative English actor of our generation, Henry Irving, was born.

Keinton Mandeville, or Kingston Mansfield, stands near the river Brue, four and a half miles north-east

of Somerton, and six miles south-west of Castle Cary station, on the Great Western Railway. Not far away is Glastonbury, which looms so large in the early ecclesiastical history of England, and is still so fascinating by reason of the splendid remains of its former greatness. In his *History of Somersetshire*, published in 1791, Collinson tells us that Keinton Mandeville, or, to use his own spelling, Kenton Mandevill, is a small parish : "the number of houses is thirty, forming a long street in the shape of an L. These houses are very neat, being built of stone, neatly chipped, and dug in the parish." The place is mentioned in *Doomsday*, and, according to Collinson, derives its second name from "the Mandevilles, who were descended from Geffrey de Magnaville, a famous soldier, who came over into this country with Duke William the Norman, and, having displayed extraordinary valour in the battle of Hastings, was by him rewarded with one hundred and eighteen manors in different counties in England, and was also appointed constable to the Tower of London, an office he held during the whole of his life. William de Magnaville, his son and heir, suffered his name corruptly to be changed into Mandeville, by which his descendants were ever after denominated." Keinton has altered little since Collinson described it, for its population is at the present time only a trifle over five hundred. The corner of England in which it is situated is one where things move slowly. Save the restoration of the parish church and the institution of a post-office and a School Board, nothing of consequence has happened at Keinton since Henry Irving was born there on the 6th of February, 1838. His birthplace is a superior sort of cottage of two storeys, with nothing to distinguish

it from scores of other modest dwellings of the same class. In design it is as simple as one of the houses which a child draws on its slate with a few straight strokes.

Henry Irving is the only child of Samuel Brodribb,



who does not seem to have been a man of strong individuality, and who failed to achieve a high degree of worldly prosperity, leave alone distinction. His wife was a Miss Mary Behenna, one of six sisters belonging to an old Cornish family. The Brodribbs christened

their son John Henry. It was not until 1856 that John Henry Brodribb was known as Henry Irving. By royal licence, dated June 15, 1889, Henry Irving was authorized to continue to use the surname of Irving in addition to and after that of Brodribb, so that his full name is now John Henry Brodribb Irving. When their son had reached the age of four, Mr. and Mrs. Brodribb left Keinton in order to live in London. They did not, however, take their child with them to the metropolis. Henry Irving's mother was a woman who combined strong practical common sense with no inconsiderable degree of foresight, and recognized that it would be of immense advantage to her son that he should spend his tender years in the midst of healthy country sights and sounds. One of her sisters, Sarah Behenna, who had married Isaac Penberthy, a Cornish captain of mines, was settled at Halsetown, a small place within a mile or so of St. Ives. To the home of this sister Mrs. Brodribb accordingly took her boy, previous to her departure with her husband for London. Whatever opinion we may hold of the influence of environment upon children, it can scarcely be doubted that Henry Irving gained very much by exchanging the sluggish atmosphere of an out-of-the-way Somersetshire village for the more vigorous and dramatic life of a mining centre in the "delectable duchy."

A good many years ago Irving re-visited his birth-place with the Batemans, and he sums up his impression of Keinton by describing it as "a God-forsaken little village." Concerning this visit he says: "I had an idea that I should remember the place thoroughly; but when I got there it was quite strange to me. It was altogether a different place from what I thought—not

at all like the picture I had in my mind." Irving failed even to recognize the house in which he was born.

The Penberthys, in whose charge the Brodribbs left their son, were remarkable people, even in a county the inhabitants of which are noted for their pronounced and curious individuality. Isaac Penberthy, who in stature was literally a giant, possessed a full share of the passion of adventure which is among the most prominent and fascinating traits of the Cornish character. His experience of the world was by no means limited to the little corner of it which had St. Ives for its centre, for, previous to his marriage, Captain Penberthy had managed the Rel del Monte mine, near Vera Cruz, in far-off Mexico. In the course of a conversation with Mr. Joseph Hatton in 1888, which was recorded by him in *The Idler* some time after, Henry Irving drew a vivid picture of his aunt, Mrs. Penberthy. "If ever there was a born queen," he said, "it is my aunt—a temperance Methodist; the sort of woman who, in her simple, grand way, walks with God. She came to London not long since. I took her to see the Baroness Burdett-Coutts when the Baroness's friend, Mrs. Brown, was alive. My aunt was the aristocrat of the meeting; she was the queen—she had a simple, grand air of superiority; rather looked down, I daresay, upon what she would consider the worldly woman of London." The parting of Henry Irving from a mother whom he has described as "lovable, devoted, a woman of fine feeling, whose affections were self-sacrificing," was bitter, though tearless. He remembers the occasion well, and tells us that he felt as if his heart were breaking. But the grief of a child of four does not, in the nature of things, endure for long, and gradually he consoled



himself for the loss of his mother's tender care with new friends and playmates. The Penberthys had three children, two boys and a girl, and with them Henry Irving was brought up, in the simple, old-fashioned house at Halsetown.

Days passed into months, and months into years, giving the boy a vivid and intense impression of the personality of his aunt, of whom he has told many stories. To Mr. Hatton he narrated the following :—  
“ About my Aunt Penberthy's character, and the way she lived with her husband. They never quarrelled ; they were always happy. She was always cheerful ; but one day, when she was out, he came home from the mine offended at something there or at home, and, to our amazement, walked into the kitchen where we youngsters were, and began to smash everything he could lay hands on. He took up the chairs and broke them across his knee, and they were pretty strong, too—nothing, however, to him ; he snapped them as if they had been the merest sticks. Drawers, tables—he smashed everything ; then walked out and went back to the mine. We were all terrified while this was going on. As for me, I got behind the door or anywhere else out of his way. It was a fine old Cornish kitchen—ingle nook, great oak beams, bacon and hams hanging on the beams—a regular farmer-like country kitchen. When he was gone, we breathed again and no longer feared. We simply waited for the queen's return, only wondering what she would say. In the evening we went to meet him as usual, my aunt with us. There he was, coming along with his great wide arms and in the same flannel costume, the very self-same giant as the day before. We gave him the same old greeting ; he received us in the same old

hearty way. My aunt and he walked together in their customary manner, she leaning on one arm, he putting the other great arm round her waist—a big, hearty giant of a fellow. When we got home, he paused at the open doorway of the kitchen, flung back his chest, and gave forth a great burst of laughter. You never heard such a laugh: it was tremendous. My aunt



CAPTAIN ISAAC PENBERTHY'S HOUSE AT HALSETOWN.

laughed too. What do you think he laughed at? The wreck of the furniture had been got together and displayed by my aunt as if the whole business was a huge joke. Broken chairs, table-legs, a cupboard door, pieces of an old seat, all manner of things were hung upon the walls, as if they were pictures, articles of *virtu*, *brac-à-brac*. And this was all that occurred. There was no scene, only the laughter. During the next day or two the place was put to rights, and never

for a moment did the affair disturb the happiness of the household ; she knew how to live with her husband, and he loved her in his big, devil-may-care kind of way. I look back with intense admiration on them both, but with reverence and respect for her."

Another of Irving's reminiscences of Mrs. Penberthy exhibits a very different side of her character : " We were out walking, she and I and her children. We came to a rather high bank ; it sloped down sharply upon the path. We had a harmless little dog with us. Two men at the top of this bank had with them a sort of mongrel bull-terrier, an ugly, vicious-looking brute. The men began to set their dog on ours. My aunt remonstrated ; they only laughed and urged on their brute. ' Call your dog off ! ' said my aunt, while we children yelled and screamed and clung to our pet, trying to get the poor wretch away from its assailant, which was gradually strangling it. The men grinned, but did not call their dog off ; they enjoyed seeing our poor little beast worried. My aunt half walked, half ran round a little pond that I well remember, and went into a farmer's house, and came out again with a large pair of shears—the kind they use for cutting grass or trimming hedges. She went up to the two dogs, and thrust the shears straight into the bull-terrier, which almost the next moment released our dog and rolled over dead. She was a most gentle and humane creature, but she stabbed that dog with the firm determination of a virago, egged on, of course, by the sufferings of her own weaker little animal, and by our cries of pain and terror."

These reminiscences of Mrs. Penberthy indicate a woman with a distinct sense of humour on the one hand, and on the other one who felt deeply, indeed

passionately, and, when under the influence of strong emotion, was capable of drastic action, with small regard to the consequences. It is not wonderful that so marked an individuality had a powerful and lasting influence on a child so impressionable and imaginative as Henry Irving.

But if the personality of



MRS. PENBERTHY.

Mrs. Penberthy influenced the boy, so also did the genius of the place in which he lived. Irving has never forgotten Halsetown and its people, and quite recently he has told a writer in *The Cornish Magazine* that he recalls the place "as a village nestling between sloping hills, bare and desolate, disfigured by great heaps of slack from the mines, and with the Knill monument standing prominent as a landmark to the east. It was a wild and weird place, fascinating in its own peculiar beauty, and taking a more definite shape in my youthful imagination by reason of the fancies and legends of the people. The stories attaching to

rock and well and hill were unending ; every man and woman had folk-lore to tell us youngsters. These legends and fairy stories have remained with me but vaguely—I was too young—but I remember the ‘guise dancing,’ when the villagers went about in masks, entering houses and frightening the children.” Henry Irving himself on one occasion took part in an improvised “guise dance,” in order to frighten an old woman called Granny Dixon, who was in the habit of harrowing the children of the village by expounding a creed, the central article of which was the punishment with hell-fire of even the most trivial offences. The future impersonator of Mephistopheles, and one of his cousins, disguised with masks, horns, and tails, surprised the old lady in the night, and attempted to force her to pray that Heaven would forgive her sins in general, and those which she had committed against the children of the place in particular. This was Henry Irving’s first appearance in any part ; by his own admission, the essay was not too successful.

The educational advantages of such a place as Halsetown in the middle of the century were, as may well be imagined, of the slightest. Such as they were, however, Henry Irving eagerly availed himself of them, and if he had the opportunity of learning only a few things, he at least learnt them thoroughly. In a district in which Methodism was a predominant influence, the study of the Bible was so seriously and fervently undertaken as to become a strenuous mental discipline, and we may be sure that the discipline lost none of its rigour in the hands of so staunch an evangelical as Mrs. Penberthy. Of books other than the Bible there were few in the home of the Penberthys. Two of these, a translation of

*Don Quixote* and a volume of old English ballads, were, however, of special significance. *Don Quixote* can under no circumstances be considered a child's book, and he would be a miraculous boy indeed who should appreciate the deeper and subtler meaning of Cervantes' masterpiece. And yet *Don Quixote* seems powerfully to have appealed to Irving's boyish imagination. It is one of the advantages of a library limited to a few volumes that each book of necessity receives the concentrated attention of the reader and becomes to him an intimate and familiar friend, and it may well have been that this child-student saw more in the great creation of the Spanish master than many a less sensitive and less ardent reader of mature years. In any case, it is the fact that Henry Irving has always desired to play *Don Quixote*. He has acted the title-part in a piece of that name; but unfortunately the Lyceum *Don Quixote* was not even the shadow of the original, but rather a distorted projection of a fragment of it. The other volume conspicuous in the home of the Penberthys, a collection of old English ballads, must have appealed vividly to a boy who possessed an unusual share of the dramatic instinct. It may well be that Henry Irving's early reading accounts in no small measure for the fact that since he has controlled the destiny of the Lyceum the banner of romance has floated uninterruptedly over that theatre.



## CHAPTER II

### FROM THE SCHOOLROOM TO THE STAGE

1849 - 1856

WHEN Henry Irving was about eleven years old, he left Halsetown, and, after spending a short time with his parents at Bristol, went with them to live in London. The Brodribbs were by no means rich, and their home was not in one of the brighter or more cheerful parts of the town ; but Irving was quite content to exchange the fresh air and romantic scenery of Cornwall for the unlovely streets of the great city. More often than not, London strikes a country-bred child as an enchanted land, where life is an Arabian Nights' entertainment. As soon as they had settled down, the Brodribbs arranged for their son to attend a school in George Yard, Lombard Street, which was directed by Dr. Pinches. The situation, in "central London's midmost roar," was a curious one for such an institution. The yard seems to have taken its name from an ancient tavern, for Strype tells us : "Near Ball Alley was the George Inn ; since the fire rebuilt with very good houses, well inhabited ; and warehouses ; being a large open yard, and called George Yard : at the further end of which is the George and Vulture Tavern, which is a large house of a great trade." The George and Vulture will, of course, be remembered by

all faithful readers of *The Pickwick Papers*. Since Irving went to school, many changes have taken place in the yard, not a few of the older houses having been swept away to make room for the ornate and pretentious building of the Deutsche Bank. Dr. Pinches seems, looking to his time, to have been a more than respectable schoolmaster. He took a special pride in teaching his pupils elocution, and afforded them opportunities for displaying their powers to their friends at a sort of speech-day held previous to breaking up for the holidays. In the elocution class Henry Irving soon made his mark; but his ambitions were hardly compatible with the very modest views of his master. A volume of verse, entitled *Summer and Winter Hours*, by Henry Glassford Bell, the well-known Scottish author and lawyer, fell into the schoolboy's hands, and one of the pieces which it contained, entitled *The Uncle*, appealed strongly to his imagination. He was eager to recite the poem, but the doctor declined emphatically to allow him to do so. His refusal is scarcely to be wondered at, for Glassford Bell's verses are extremely gruesome. The uncle is introduced in the following dismal fashion :

He was a man of gloomy mind,  
 And few his converse sought;  
 But, it was said, in solitude  
 His conscience with him wrought,  
 And there, before his mental eye,  
 Some hideous vision brought.

In the course of the poem the uncle tells his little nephew of his unrequited passion for his mother; confesses that, maddened by jealousy, he murdered his own brother, the boy's father; and, turning to an old chest

shows the child the bones of his victim. The evidence of his crime are, however, too much for the unworthy uncle, who becomes delirious and dies. In place of *The Uncle*, young Irving recited the austere and comparatively unexciting *Defence of Hamilton Rowan*, a famous example of Currán's oratory. Not many boys of Irving's age would have been attracted by so sombre a piece of melodrama as *The Uncle*; it is interesting to note that thus early in his life he was fascinated by a composition of which the chief characteristics are unrelieved gloom and horror. In after years Irving frequently recited *The Uncle* with thrilling effect.

The programmes of the speech-days at Dr. Pinches's school included selections from *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and other plays by Shakespeare, in which Irving took part. On one occasion a portion of Talfourd's tragedy, *Ion*, was given, and of Irving's share in it Mr. Creswick, an actor of high repute in his day, has left us an interesting reminiscence. "I was once invited," he tells us, "to hear some schoolboys recite speeches previous to their breaking up for the holidays. The schoolmaster was an old friend of mine, whom I very much respected. The room was filled from wall to wall with the parents and friends of the pupils. I was not much entertained with the first part. I must confess that I was a little bored, but suddenly there came out a lad who at once struck me as being rather uncommon, and he riveted my attention. It was a difficult task that he had to accomplish. The performance, I think was a scene from *Ion*, in which he played Adrastus. I saw that he left his schoolfellow a long way behind. That schoolboy was Master Henry Irving. Seeing that he had dramatic aptitude

I gave him a word of encouragement, perhaps the first he had ever received, and certainly the first he had received from one in the dramatic profession." Young Irving's performances were long remembered at the school in George Yard, for Sir Edward Clarke, who was a pupil of Dr. Pinches some years later, tells us that his own essays in the art of recitation were invariably greeted with some such remark as "Very good indeed ; but you should have heard Irving do it."

Soon after his fourteenth birthday Henry Irving left school, and, his parents having decided on a commercial career for him, he entered the offices of Messrs. W. Thacker & Co., East India merchants, in Newgate Street. While he remained in the employment of the firm he discharged his duties conscientiously and to the complete satisfaction of his employers ; but his heart was far from the counting-house. He had long dreamt of the stage as a profession, and gradually his mind was entirely dominated by the idea. In spite of the fact that the probabilities of his ever becoming an actor seemed to be of the slightest, he proceeded forthwith to prepare himself for the stage with the most indomitable perseverance, the most extraordinary deliberation. According to Diderot, "the stage is a resource, never a choice. Never did actor become so from love of virtue, from desire to be useful in the world, or to serve his country ; never from any of the honourable motives which might incline a right mind, a feeling heart, a sensitive soul, to so fine a profession." Irving's career in a great measure is a contradiction of this dogmatic statement : with him the stage was a choice, not a resource ; he gave up the fair prospect of a commercial career because he felt that he *must* become an actor at

all costs. Once he had made up his mind, he never hesitated nor looked back, but strove with unconquerable constancy and inflexible will to achieve his heart's desire. His high sense of duty did not permit him to filch his employers' time in order to carry out his arduous scheme of self-preparation. By scorning the most ordinary delights, he made the leisure wherein to study such books as his very scanty means enabled him to purchase. He committed to memory innumerable poems and fragments of plays, and declaimed and performed them to an audience consisting only of himself. He never seems for a moment to have lost confidence in his ultimate success ; his buoyant temperament rose superior to the agonies of doubt and apprehension which torture the youth of so many artists.

Young Irving seized eagerly on every means of self-improvement. In the early 'fifties London underwent an epidemic of elocution classes, brought on to a large extent by the indirect influence of Phelps, who was then presenting the classical drama at Sadler's Wells Theatre with admirable courage and devotion. The most ambitious of these classes was conducted by Henry Thomas, and was known as the "City Elocution Class," from the fact that its meetings were held at the Institute, Gould Square, near to Fenchurch Street. Thomas did not profess to be a teacher of elocution, and no formal system of instruction was resorted to. The members of the class learnt their art by practising it. Each of them studied a piece of his own selection, and recited it to his comrades, who afterwards subjected the performance to the most searching criticism of which they were capable. Henry Irving joined the class in 1853, and his first appearance has been thus described

by one of his fellow-members: "One evening a youth of some fifteen years old presented himself as a new member. His appearance was such as would make ladies say, 'What a nice boy!' He was rather tall for his age, dressed in a black cloth suit, with what was called a round jacket, and deep white linen collar turned over it; his face was very handsome, with a mass of black hair, and eyes bright and flashing with intelligence. He was called upon for his first recitation, and fairly electrified the class with an unusual display of elocutionary skill and dramatic intensity." At the City Elocution Class Irving repeated his triumph as a school-boy, and rapidly became the most distinguished of its members.

It will be readily imagined that, living at such a place as Halsetown, Irving had not the opportunity of play-going in his boyhood. The nearest approach to theatrical performances which he witnessed were the shows at the Cornish fairs, which in those days were of considerable size and importance. He had lived in London for a whole year before he went to any theatre. The first play he ever saw was *Hamlet*, at Sadler's Wells, when Phelps played the title-part. From this time onwards he saw most of the classical plays which Phelps presented during his memorable tenure of the Wells. To Henry Irving a visit to the theatre was not a relaxation, but an object-lesson, and, in order to gain the utmost possible advantages from the performances which he saw, he carefully studied the plays beforehand, and acted the various characters in imagination.

"When I was a boy," he told the students of Harvard University, "I had a habit which I think would be useful to all young students. Before going to see a



play of Shakespeare's, I used to form—in a very juvenile way—a theory as to the working out of the whole drama, so as to correct my conceptions by those of the actors; and though I was, as a rule, absurdly wrong, there can be no doubt that any method of independent study is of enormous importance, not only to youngsters, but also to students of a larger growth." The lighter forms of drama appealed to him scarcely at all: it was tragedy which attracted him, and by preference Shakespearian tragedy. But on one occasion, of which he still retains a vivid recollection, he saw an entertainment of a type the reverse of classical. Without saying a word to anybody, he determined to go to the theatre alone, and accordingly scrambled into the gallery of the Adelphi, where a triple bill, consisting of *The Haunted Man*, *The Enchanted Isle*, and the farce, *Slasher and Crasher*, was being played. The entire performance lasted nearly six hours, but at the conclusion he was still hungry for more. Each play which Irving saw furnished him with food for reflection, and, boy though he was, his mind was occupied, not only with the acting of the piece, but also with problems of stage-management.

After the lapse of a considerable time, the City Elocution Class moved from the Institute, Gould Square, to Sussex Hall, Leadenhall Street; and as the new quarters were well adapted for the purpose, regular dramatic representations were given at intervals. The pieces selected for performance were as a rule of a light and unambitious character, such as Selby's *Boots at the Swan*, *Delicate Ground*, *Love in Humble Life*, *Who Speaks First?* *The Man with the Carpet Bag*, *Little Toddekins*, and *A Silent Widow*. Occasionally,

however, plays of serious interest were attempted, and when this was the case, the services of Henry Irving, both as actor and stage-manager, were invaluable. In selected scenes from *The Iron Chest*, he played the part of Wilford, secretary to Sir Edward Mortimer, with marked distinction. Colman's gloomy drama seems always to have had a strange attraction for Irving, who, as we shall see later on, revived it at the Lyceum in 1879. On one occasion the members of the Elocution Class played at a real theatre. They performed Tobin's comedy, *The Honeymoon*, at the old Soho Theatre, with elaborate scenery, costumes, and stage effects; and Irving's share in the production was received with general approval.

About this time Irving formed an acquaintance which was destined to have an emphatic influence on his career. One of the most prominent members of Phelps's company, at Sadler's Wells, was an actor named William Hoskins. Hoskins is generally described as a light comedian, but he was nevertheless entrusted with such parts as Austin Tresham in Browning's *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* and Buckingham in *Henry VIII.*, while on the revival of Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, he spoke a prologue specially written by Richard Hengist Horne, the author of *Orion*. The acquaintance between Irving and Hoskins rapidly grew into intimate friendship, and the latter, perceiving the latent ability of the would-be actor, encouraged him by every means in his power. Each morning at eight o'clock Irving went to Hoskins and received from him an hour's lesson in elocution and those other arts which go to the making of an actor. During this period the duties of Hoskins at Sadler's Wells were anything but light, and it proves at once

the kindness of his heart and the sincerity of his interest in the novice that he should get up at what most players would consider an unearthly hour, in order to teach Irving the rudiments of his craft. In addition to these lessons, Irving devoted some portion of his leisure to learning dancing, while he regularly attended Shury's school of arms in Chancery Lane, in order to make himself proficient in fencing.

While he was thus preparing himself, his parents of course became aware of his intention to become an actor, and his mother energetically opposed it. His comrade at the Elocution Class, from whom I have already quoted tells us :

"Henry Irving's mother, like many other mothers had a great dread of her son 'taking to the stage.' . . . I remember her as tall, somewhat stately, and very gentle. On one occasion she begged me very earnestly to dissuade him from thinking of the stage as a profession, and, having read much of the vicissitudes of actors' lives, their hardships and the precariousness of their employment, I did my best to impress the view upon him, at the same time having the strongest possible inclination to the 'sock and buskin' myself."

When Henry Irving was about seventeen, Hoskins left England to reside permanently in Australia. So attached had he become to his pupil that he strongly urged him to accompany him ; but Irving was deterred from doing so by the entreaties of his mother. Before his departure Hoskins gave him a letter of introduction, with the words : "You will go on the stage. When you want an engagement, present this letter, and you will find one." In addition to this, Hoskins introduced him to Phelps. The manager of Sadler's Wells, like

Mrs. Siddons, Macready, and Fanny Kemble, had a poor opinion of the profession of which he was an ornament. He, however, received Irving graciously enough, and went so far as to offer him an engagement; but he accompanied the proposal with the discouraging words: "Young man, have nothing to do with the Stage; it is a bad profession."

## CHAPTER III

### THE FIRST ENGAGEMENT

1856—1857

WHEN he was between eighteen and nineteen Irving finally decided to give up the Office for the Stage. The protests of his mother, emphasized though they were by the warning of Phelps, were insufficient to break down a resolution which had been taken after months, and indeed years, of anxious reflection. He refused the offer of an engagement at Sadler's Wells because he was unwilling to appear in London before he had properly learned his business, a decision which did infinite credit to his modesty and good sense. Armed with the letter of introduction given to him by Hoskins, he approached Mr. E. D. Davis, a theatrical manager who was about to open a theatre at Sunderland, with the result that he was immediately engaged. The date fixed for the opening of the New Royal Lyceum Theatre, as Mr. Davis's play-house was called, was the 29th of September, 1856. For some time previous to the momentous day, Irving was in a state of terrible anxiety lest the workmen should not finish the new building in time for the opening night ; but he derived no small consolation from seeing his name for the first time in print as a full-fledged pro-

fessional actor. It is worth noting that on the 28th of April of the same year, a tiny girl called Ellen Terry made her first appearance on any stage as Mamillius in *The Winter's Tale* at the Princess's Theatre, London, then under the direction of Charles Kean.

Irving's misgivings proved to be unfounded, for the New Royal Lyceum was ready by the appointed time. The play-bill of that memorable performance was a sheet of paper crowded with letterpress altogether too long to be reproduced in these pages ; but the following fragment is sufficient to show the part which Irving took in the evening's entertainment :

## NEW ROYAL LYCEUM THEATRE.

(Licensed Pursuant to Act of Parliament.)

PROPRIETOR AND MANAGER - MR. E. D. DAVIS.

The Erection being completed, the New Royal Lyceum Theatre

WILL BE OPENED

FOR THE RECEPTION OF THE PUBLIC

ON MONDAY EVENING NEXT, SEPT. 29TH, 1856.

The Season will commence with Sir E. L. BULWER LYTTON'S beautiful play,

## RICHELIEU.

<i>Louis the Thirteenth</i> . . . . .	MR. COURTENAY.
<i>Gaston (Duke of Orleans)</i> . . . . .	MR. IRVING.
<i>The Sieur de Beringhen (a courtier)</i> . . . . .	MR. ALFRED DAVIS.
<i>Baradas (favourite of the King)</i> . . . . .	MR. ORVELL.
<i>The Chevalier de Mauprat</i> . . . . .	MR. J. C. COWPER.
<i>Richelieu</i> (first time in Sunderland) . . . . .	MR. DAVIS.
<i>Father Joseph</i> . . . . .	MR. FOOTE.

<i>Huguet (a spy)</i>	MR. BRUNT.
<i>François (a page)</i>	MISS AGNES MARKHAM.
<i>Pages to Richelieu</i>	MISSES POULSON AND MONTAGU.
<i>Pages to the King</i>	MISSES MILNER, LEIGH, CARTER.
<i>Count de Clermont</i>	MR. GIBSON.
<i>Captain of Guard</i>	MR. WAITE.
<i>Gaoler</i>	MR. BRODERICK.
<i>Governor</i>	MR. S. JOHNSON.
<i>First Secretary</i>	MR. MASTERS.
<i>Second Do.</i>	MR. EDOUIN.
<i>Third Do.</i>	MR. MORELLI.
<i>Julie de Mortemar (Richelieu's ward)</i>	MRS. ALFRED DAVIS.
<i>Marion de Lorme</i>	MISS DE CLIFFORD.

To conclude with the highly successful new piece of Oriental Sentimentality, or Sentimental Orientality, extracted from the dreams of the Arabian Nights, by the indefatigable visionary, HOO-ZURE-ATAR, and which to be appreciated must be seen, as the most extravagantly laudatory ecomiums (*sic*) must fall immeasurably short of the gigantic merit of

## THE ENCHANTED LAKE!

OR,

### The Fisherman and The Genie.

<i>Achmet.</i>	MR. S. JOHNSON.
<i>Mooney Pasha</i>	MR. FOOTE.
<i>Abdallah</i>	MR. MASTERS.
<i>Hassan</i>	MR. ALFRED DAVIS.
<i>Monkey</i>	MR. EDOUIN.
<i>Genius of the Bottle</i>	MR. COURTENAY.
<i>Selim</i>	MR. GIBSON.
<i>Azor and Azim</i>	{ MRS. COURTENAY AND MISS CARTER.
<i>Cooks</i>	{ MESSRS. BRUNT, IRVING, WAITE, BRODERICK, OWEN.
<i>Fatima and Zelia.</i>	{ MISSSES OWEN AND DE CLIFFORD.
<i>Queen of the Peri</i>	MISS MILNER.
<i>Peris</i>	{ MISSSES LEIGH, POULSON, C. BROCK, B. BROCK, F. BROCK, ETC.



It will be noticed that Henry Irving, more fortunate in this respect than the majority of the actors of the period, did not spend the early days of his stage career in the wearisome performance of a round of "thinking parts" and "walking gentlemen"; he was assigned at once a speaking character in a famous play. His impersonation of the Duke of Orleans was not a success, but, in order to give a more dramatic



*Photo by Frances Browne.]*  
SAM JOHNSON.

air to the opening incident of his theatrical life, his failure has often been grossly exaggerated. He has, however, himself admitted that he was nervous and suffered from stage fright. The part was a specially trying one for an unpractised player, as the Duke of Orleans is on the stage when the curtain rises, and has to speak the first line of the play, which consists of the significant and appropriate words, "Here's to our enterprise!" It was certainly from no carelessness or want of preparation that Irving's *début* was so unpromising, for he had taken immense pains to think out the minutest details of his performance. To his costume he devoted extraordinary attention, and, according to one of his fellow-actors, he was "from

his splendid white hat and feathers to the tips of his shoes a perfect picture; and, no doubt, had borrowed his authority from some historical picture of the Louis XIII. period." In *The Enchanted Lake*, which followed *Richelieu*, he took the very modest part of a cook, and had no chance of distinguishing himself.

But if Irving's first appearance was anything but a triumph, his representation a few nights after of Cleomenes in *The Winter's Tale* was a positive disaster. The dramatic reporter of the *Sunderland Times*, writing in the issue of the 11th of October, 1856, expresses himself in the following unequivocal terms:

"The minor parts were creditably performed, with the exception of Cleomenes by Mr. Irving, who utterly ruined the last scene but one, where he should have described Leontes' discovery of his daughter. He came on to the stage without knowing a single word of his part, and although he had the cue pitched at him by the prompter in a tone loud enough to be heard in most parts of the house, he was unable to follow it, and was compelled to walk off the stage amid a shower of hisses."

This, so far as I am able to make out, is the only reference to Irving in the *Sunderland* press during his stay there.

It should be mentioned that, at this performance of *The Winter's Tale*, Miss Glyn played Hermione and Mr. Mead was Leontes, while amongst the members of the company was Mr. Sam Johnson, whose name has been so long familiar to us in the play-bills of another and more famous Lyceum. During his engagement in the north of England, Irving, besides gaining such experience as comes of playing a number of minor parts,

had the opportunity of seeing almost every variety of theatrical entertainment and of making the acquaintance of not a few artists of distinction. Amongst those who visited the New Lyceum while he was there was Mr. Sims Reeves, who appeared as Tom Tug in *The Waterman*. He was accompanied by Miss Arabella Goddard and several other musical performers of repute. Miss Cushman appeared as Romeo, and in other leading Shakespearian parts, and a host of tragedians, long since dead or forgotten, visited the theatre for short periods as "stars." These included Ira Aldridge, the once famous "African Roscius." As was then the custom at provincial theatres, the leading members of the stock company were accorded a benefit at the close of the season. For his benefit Mr. Sam Johnson played *Richard III.*, and his performance of a part far removed from those which he generally undertook was highly praised. On Boxing Day, 1856, the pantomime, *Puss in Boots*, in which the entire company took part, was produced with unusual success. Early in the following year, Henry Irving, feeling that his opportunities were not sufficiently large, left Sunderland, although his manager pressed him hard to remain at the New Lyceum,

## CHAPTER IV

### EDINBURGH DAYS

1857-1859

THE most severe part of Henry Irving's early apprenticeship to his art was spent at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, of the company of which he became a member on the 9th of February, 1857. His manager was Mr. R. H. Wyndham, who holds a conspicuous and honourable place in the history of the Scottish Stage. Mr. Wyndham and his wife extended to the young actor a sympathy which must have been infinitely grateful to him in those wearying days of unrelieved drudgery. In 1891, in a speech at the Students' Union Dramatic Society, Irving told his hearers that "he was a member of a University at Edinburgh—the old Theatre Royal. There he had studied for two years and a half his beautiful art, and learnt the lesson that they would all learn, that—

Deep the oak must sink its roots in earth obscure,  
That hopes to lift its branches to the sky."

Irving's first appearance in Edinburgh was made in *Richelieu*, in the part of the Duke of Orleans, which, as we have seen, he played on the occasion of his *début* at Sunderland. The part of the Cardinal was taken by

Barry Sullivan, whose impersonation drew from the critic of the *Scotsman* the doubtless well-deserved remark that he "looked less like a dying Cardinal than a dead one dragged up to revisit the glimpses of the moon; and on recovering from his pretended swoon stalked about and roared so as to excite an extraordinary feeling of incongruity between his cadaverous aspect and rigorous action and intonation." While Barry Sullivan was appearing in the "legitimate" drama at the Royal, Vandenhoff and his daughter were doing the same at the Queen's Theatre. The place of Sullivan was taken on the 9th of March by a star of much greater brilliance. Miss Helen Faucit (afterwards Lady Theodore Martin) commenced a short engagement at Edinburgh by appearing as Mabel in Westland Marston's play, *The Patrician's Daughter*. During her stay, she played Imogen, Lady Teazle, and Pauline, so that Henry Irving thus early in his career had the advantage of seeing and supporting an exquisite actress of immense popularity, who excited the raptures of writers so different as De Quincey and Sir Archibald Alison, Will Carleton and Sir Arthur Helps. It is interesting to note in passing that during Miss Faucit's engagement Thackeray lectured in Edinburgh on "Humour and Charity." When she concluded her stay at the Theatre Royal, her place as "star" was filled by Madame Celeste, and she, after a short interval, was succeeded by Ben Webster, who found a powerful rival at the Queen's Theatre in Robson, "a man of genius and a prince of eccentrics," as Mr. Sala calls him in his rare little biography of this extraordinary player.

On the 13th of May *Hamlet* was produced, the part of Horatio being assigned to Irving, who played Banquo

in *Macbeth* three days later. On the same evening, a version of *The Three Musketeers* was acted under the title of *The King's Musketeers*, in which Irving played Athos. Later in the same month he was seen in minor parts in plays so various as *Douglas*, *Richard III.*, *Teddy the Tiler*, and *The Rag Picker of Paris*. The season was concluded on the 1st of June with Mr. and Mrs. Wyndham's benefit.

About the middle of the month Toole, accompanied by Miss Louise Keeley, visited Edinburgh, and the steadfast friendship between him and Henry Irving, which has lasted through all the years that have followed, was begun. On the 21st, Brough's burlesque of *Perdita*, with a powerful cast, was performed. The part of Leontes was played by W. Gomersal, a low comedian, whose chief title to distinction was his extraordinary likeness to Napoleon. Miss Keeley made a charming Florizel; Toole was Autolycus; Miss Nicol and Miss Foote played Hermione and Perdita respectively; and Irving had the comparatively small part of Camillo. Towards the end of July *Paul Pry* was put on for Miss Keeley's benefit, when Toole of course played the title-part and Irving that of Harry Stanley, while in the following month some performances of *London Assurance* were given. Sir William Don, a gentleman whose baronetcy was much insisted on in the play-bills, appeared as Mark Meddle; Irving was Dazzle; and Toole and Miss Keeley were seen as Adolphus Spanker and Grace Harkaway. On the 18th of November the so-called summer season terminated. On the last day of the year, the pantomime *Little-Bo-Peep* was produced, and to Irving fell the task of impersonating "Scruncher, Captain of the Wolves"! *Little-Bo-Peep* ran until the



6th of February, 1858, and a few days later Mrs. Stirling appeared in a series of impersonations, the most popular of which proved to be Peg Woffington in *Masks and Faces*.

At this time Mr. Wyndham was in possession of the Queen's Theatre as well as the Royal, which was shortly to be pulled down in order to make way for the new General Post Office. On the 26th of February we find that *Henry VIII.* was performed "for the benefit of Mr. Vandenhoff, and his last appearance in Edinburgh." The play-bill also tells us: "Mr. Vandenhoff will have the honour of speaking a farewell address, when he will take his final leave of the Edinburgh Stage." On this occasion he played Cardinal Wolsey, and Irving was the Earl of Surrey. The next important engagement at this house was that of the principal members of the London Adelphi Company, including Ben Webster, Wright, Paul Bedford, and Madame Celeste. Wyndham's first season at the Queen's closed on the 19th of April, when as usual he and his wife had a benefit. In the course of the evening he announced in a speech from the stage that "although every exertion had been put forth, he wound up with a loss of £1000, independent of £500 expended on the decoration of the theatre. He had found that heavy pieces were not attractive, and in the ensuing season lighter representations would be put on the stage, in which several new faces would be introduced."

During the remainder of the year 1858, Irving played sometimes at the Royal, sometimes at the Queen's Theatre. At the former, on the 7th of June a "new Scottish drama," called *The Gaberlunzie Man*, was produced, in which he had an unimportant part, and later in the summer Toole reappeared, and was once more

enthusiastically welcomed. On the 27th of December the pantomime *The Sleeping Beauty* was performed for the first time when Irving took the female part of the spiteful fairy Venoma, and was, according to the critic of the *Scotsman*, "a model of a disagreeable and spiteful genius." During March, Irving appeared as Coitier in *Louis XI.*, Claudius in *Hamlet*, and Rashleigh in *Rob Roy*. On the 19th of that month, he played three parts in one evening, appearing first as the ghost of Henry VI. in *Richard III.*, and then as Jasper Dryfesdale in *Mary Queen of Scots*, and lastly as Malcolm Græme in *The Lady of the Lake*. When I state that this was by no means an exceptional evening's work, it will be conceded that the thirty shillings a week which Irving at that time received for his services were well earned, and that he deserved the benefit performance which was given for him on the 2nd of May. On this occasion he played Gustave de Grignon in *The Ladies' Battle*, and Walter Warren in *A Poor Girl's Temptation*, which was then given for the first time in Edinburgh. Later in the month his principal parts were Careless in *The School for Scandal*, Macduff in *Macbeth*, and the pilot in a piece of that name. On the 26th of May a final performance was given at the Royal, after which the historic play-house was closed for ever. The evening's entertainment commenced with *Masks and Faces*, in which Irving played Soaper, and was followed by the farce *His Last Legs*, in which he likewise took part. In addition, a "nautical drama," a "Farewell Address," and a "Valedictory Sketch," were given, so that the audience, which included nearly all the celebrities of the Scottish metropolis, could not complain of the quantity of the fare provided for them.

In 1859 Irving played a few unimportant parts in Shakespearian and other plays at the Surrey Theatre, of the company of which, Creswick, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Calvert, Widdicomb, and Miss Elsworthy, were then the leading members. The summer season at the Queen's Theatre, Edinburgh, began on the 25th of June, and during its course Irving played an astonishing number of parts of various kinds. "Light comedy lead," according to Mr. J. C. Didbin, in his *Annals of the Edinburgh Stage*, "was his particular department, but he sustained many parts in burlesque, heavy lead, low comedy, and walking gentleman—a combination that Wyndham never again obtained in any single member of the company." On the opening night of the season *Asmodeus* was produced, and Miss Julia St. George and Irving were advertised to play the principal characters. A few days after, Miss Louise Keeley joined the company, and early in July, Irving played the Duke of Argyle in *The Heart of Midlothian*, and Charles XII. in the play of that name. The 5th of August was set apart for Miss Louise Keeley's benefit, when *London Assurance* was played, Mr. Montague Williams, the great criminal advocate, to whom Miss Keeley was subsequently married, taking the part of Charles Courtly and Irving that of Dazzle. In the after-picce, *Dearest Elizabeth*, "the distinguished London amateur, Tom Pierce, Esq.," appeared as Mr. Lax, "Tom Pierce, Esq." being none other than Mr. F. C. Burnand, the present editor of *Punch*. A very interesting account of this performance will be found in the first volume of Montague Williams's *Leaves of a Life*. Irving's long Edinburgh engagement was drawing to a close, for an offer from London came with which he

thought it to his advantage to close. Accordingly, on the 13th of September the play-bill of the Queen's Theatre announced the "farewell benefit of Mr. Irving, previous to his departure for the Princess's Theatre, London." The piece chosen for the occasion was *The Lady of Lyons*, in which Irving played Claude Melnotte, and Miss St. George, Pauline. On this occasion Irving made his first essay in the art of addressing the audience from the stage, an art in which at the present time he has no rival among actor-managers.

Of the enormous toil and infinite variety of labour which were the lot of Henry Irving during his Edinburgh engagement, this summary gives only a hint. Those who would appreciate the full measure of the unceasing drudgery of those old stock-company days must refer to the complete list of parts played by him under the Wyndham management, which is contained in Mr. Austin Brereton's careful biographical sketch published some sixteen years ago. In two and a half years he appeared in four hundred and twenty-eight recorded characters. If we exclude Sundays and the brief periods during which the theatre was closed, we find that the young player had on an average to present a new part every day. It may be questioned whether any of our great English actors have undergone a discipline so exacting: it is utterly improbable that in the future any one should have the opportunity of so amazing an experience. The stock-company has been abolished, and nothing has been devised adequately to take its place in the training of the actor.

It is characteristic of Irving that he looks forward to the future of his art with enviable optimism. "There

are some," he tells us, in one of his addresses, "who lament that there are now no schools for actors. This is a very idle lamentation. Every actor in full employment gets plenty of schooling, for the best schooling is practice, and there is no school so good as a well-conducted play-house." This may be true enough ;—but would Sir Henry consider the performance of a small part for hundreds of nights in such a play as *Charley's Aunt* full employment? Would he maintain that it was the best school, or indeed, schooling in any real sense, as compared with his own novitiate? We may quite agree with him that "the way to learn to do a thing is to do it ; and in learning to act by acting, though there is plenty of incidental hard drill and hard work, there is nothing commonplace or unfruitful." The worst of it is that the average young actor of to-day, who is alike without extraordinary abilities or powerful influence, rarely has the chance of hard drill and hard work. He is doomed to do one small thing so frequently, that the repetition of it at length becomes, not merely commonplace and unfruitful, but positively injurious.

We can picture for ourselves easily enough the innocent, if not over-refined, bohemianism of the Edinburgh players of the 'fifties. A dozen writers have described those days of small salaries and hard work, and quite recently Mr. Pinero has treated the subject dramatically with his usual skill, in *Trelawney of the Wells*. James Telfer, Augustus Colpoys, Ferdinand Gadd, Tom Wrench, Mrs. Telfer, Avonia Bunn, Rose Trelawney, and Imogen Parrott, had doubtless their counterparts in the company of the theatre over which Mr. and Mrs. Wyndham presided forty years ago. At that time only the most brilliant players achieved anything like

wide celebrity; those who made up the rank and file did their work almost unnoticed, and deemed themselves fortunate if they received an occasional crumb of journalistic praise. It has been reserved for the minor actor of the present day to be puffed into notoriety on the slightest excuse, by means of paragraph, interview, and photograph. During his Edinburgh days, Irving scarcely ever got even a fairly good press notice; at times his performances received a word or two of stereotyped approval, but for the most part his efforts were passed over in absolute silence. Lack of recognition, however, did but strengthen him in his resolve to distinguish himself, for he was a strong, even a stubborn man in the face of adversity, and possessed an enormous measure of patience. The majority of the pieces in which he performed were farces, and burlesques, and melodramas as extravagant as any farce could possibly be. At the same time he was not without considerable experience in the Shakespearian drama, for he played Sylvius and Orlando in *As You Like It*; Pisanio in *Cymbeline*; Hortensio, Biondello, and Petruccio in an adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*; Guildenstern, Horatio, Claudius, a Priest, the Ghost, Osric, and Laertes, in *Hamlet*; the Earl of Surrey in *Henry VIII.*; Curan in *King Lear*; Philip of France in *King John*; Seyton, Banquo, Ross, and Macduff in *Macbeth*; Bassanio and Salarino in *The Merchant of Venice*; Montano, Cassio, and a Messenger in *Othello*; Catesby, Richmond, and the Ghost of Henry VI. in *Richard III.*; and Paris and Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet*. To this list of parts, which is, I believe, complete, must be added Irving's numerous appearances in those Shakespearian productions in which he was merely a "walking



gentleman." It is doubtful if any English actor under the age of twenty-five was ever more intimately associated with the classic drama.

The members of Mr. Wyndham's company appeared from time to time at the theatres of some of the larger Scottish towns, such as Dundee. While on one of these little tours, Irving, in conjunction with the late Edward Saker, afterwards manager of the Alexandra Theatre, Liverpool, decided to give a public reading at Linlithgow. The business arrangements were left in Saker's hands, and he took care to have the sleepy old town, in which little has happened since the Regent Murray was shot by Hamilton of Bothwell Haugh, attractively billed with announcements of the proposed entertainment. The result of the enterprise is best told in Irving's own words:—"The day came which was to make or mar us quite, and we arrived at Linlithgow in high spirits. I felt a thrill of pride at seeing my name for the first time in big capitals on the posters which announced that 'at eight o'clock precisely' Mr. Henry Irving would read *The Lady of Lyons*. This was highly satisfactory, and gave us an excellent appetite for a frugal tea. At the hotel we eagerly questioned our waiter as to the probability of there being a great rush. He pondered some time, as if calculating the number of people who had personally assured him of their determination to be present; but we could get no other answer from him than 'Nane can tell.' Did he think there would be fifty people there? 'Nane can tell.' Did he think that the throng would be so great that the Provost would have to be summoned to keep order? Even this audacious proposition did not induce him to commit himself, and

we were left to infer that, in his opinion, it was not at all unlikely.

"Eight o'clock drew near, and we sallied out to survey the scene of operations. The crowd had not yet begun to collect in front of the Town Hall, and the man who had undertaken to be there with the key was not visible. As it was getting late, and we were afraid of keeping the public waiting in the chill air, we went in search of the door-keeper. He was quietly reposing in the bosom of his family, and to our remonstrance replied, 'Ou, ay, the Readin'! I forgot a' about it.' This was not inspiriting, but we put it down to harmless ignorance. It was not to be expected that the man who looked after the Town Hall key would feel much interest in *The Lady of Lyons*.

"The door was opened, the gas was lighted, and my manager made the most elaborate preparations for taking the money. He had even provided himself with change, in case some opulent citizen of Linlithgow should come with nothing less than a sovereign. While he was thus energetically applying himself to business, I was strolling like a casual spectator on the other side of the street, taking some last feverish glances at the play, and anxiously watching for the first symptoms of 'the rush.'

"The time went on. The town clock struck eight, and still there was no sign of 'the rush.' The manager mournfully counted and recounted the change for that sovereign. Half-past eight, and not a soul to be seen—not even a small boy! It was clear that nobody intended to come, and I could not read *The Lady of the Lyons* to an audience consisting of the manager, with a face as long as two tragedies, so there was nothing for it

but to beat a retreat. No one came out even to witness our discomfiture. Linlithgow could not have taken the trouble to study the posters, which now seemed such horrid mockeries in our eyes. I don't think either of us could for some time afterwards read any announcement concerning 'eight o'clock precisely,' without emotion.

"We managed to scrape together enough money to pay the expenses, which operation was a sore trial to my speculative manager, and a pretty severe tax upon the emoluments of the 'juvenile lead.' As to Linlithgow, we voted it a dull place, still wrapped in mediæval slumber, and therefore insensible to the charms of the poetic drama, and to youthful aspirations after glory. We returned to Edinburgh the same night, and on the journey, by way of showing that I was not at all cast down, I favoured my manager with selections from the play, which he good-humouredly tolerated, though there was a sadness in his smile which touched my sensitive mind with compassion."

## CHAPTER V

### MANCHESTER AND ELSEWHERE

1859—1866

HENRY IRVING'S first appearance in the West End of London was made at the Princess's Theatre, under the management of the elder Augustus Harris, on the 24th of September, 1859. On this occasion a new play, called *Ivy Hall*, adapted by John Oxenford from Octave Feuillet's drama, founded by the author on his novel *Le Roman d'un Jeune Homme Pauvre*, was produced. Of the French piece Mr. Brander Matthews tells us:—"The scene is skilfully chosen; the characters are sharply contrasted; and a dexterous use is made of our love for the heroic and self-sacrificing." But the critics fell foul of the English version, one of them declaring that the audience were more interested in the scenery than the play, while another could find in *Ivy Hall* "no feature of what may be called either interest or novelty." The principal parts at the Princess's were taken by Bland, Harcourt, Frank Mathews, Widdicomb, Mrs. Weston, Miss Newbury, Miss Kate Saville, and Mrs. Charles Young. Irving's part consisted of only six lines in the first act of the play, and his name does not appear in any of the first-night notices or advertisements. To an ambitious young actor who

had just played Claude Melnotte in Edinburgh with considerable success, this was a humiliating state of things, the more so that there was little or no prospect of improvement. Irving therefore went to his manager and asked him to absolve him from the three years' engagement into which he had entered. After strongly advising him to remain, Mr. Augustus Harris yielded to his wish, and he determined that he would only return to London, when he might reasonably hope to take a place, honourable if not distinguished, on the metropolitan stage. Accordingly, he turned his face towards Scotland once more.

His visit to London was, however, destined to be not altogether unfruitful. Encouraged by a few of his friends, he arranged to give two public readings at Crosby Hall. The plays chosen were the then well-nigh inevitable *Lady of Lyons* on the 19th of December, and Sheridan Knowles's *Virginus* on the 8th of February. On the day following the first reading, Henry Irving tasted, for the first time in his life, the sweets of favourable and detailed criticism in the great London journals. The *Standard* spoke of his performance with enthusiasm : "If Mr. Irving's reading on the stage is as effective as it was at Crosby Hall, we may predict for him a brilliant and deserved success, for his conception is good, his delivery is clear and effective, and there is a gentlemanly ease and grace in his manner, which is exceedingly pleasing to an audience. Towards the end of the performance, when Claude Melnotte, under the name of Mourier, had his last interview with Pauline, the audience became deeply affected, and from some parts of the hall sobs were distinctly audible. At the close, an enthusiastic burst of applause rewarded him as he

retired, and was continued until he again made his appearance on the platform and acknowledged the compliment." The *Daily Telegraph* considered that Irving's "conception of the several parts, and the ease and naturalness with which he passed from one scene to another, evinced careful study, as well as taste and discrimination", while the *Even* declared that he exhibited a breadth and vigour which reflected great credit on his penetration. More significant still was the verdict of a critic who described himself as impressed by "the finer indefinite something which proves, incontestably and instantaneously, that the fire of genius is present in the artist." The success of the first reading was equalled by that of the second. As the *Standard* pointed out, it was a Herculean task to keep the attention of an audience while reading a five-act play. When we remember that the play was *Virginia*, a wearisome farrago of stilted fustian, it was almost a miracle that Irving concluded amidst the warm and sincere congratulations and applause of his hearers.

On the 7th of April, 1860, Irving commenced an engagement with Mr. Edmund Glover at the Theatre Royal, Glasgow. The same evening he played in *The Lady of Lyons*; but Lytton's tragedy was not the real attraction on this occasion, for the most prominent place in the bill was given to "Signor Duvalli, the Champion Ascensionist of the World, who will make his astonishing ascent and descent from the extreme back of the stage to the upper Gallery." In May a new play by Andrew Macnair, a local author, entitled *The Ways of the World*, was acted for the first time, and called forth the emphatic condemnation of the critic of the *Glasgow Herald*, who nevertheless spoke of



Irving's performance in it with great approval. Amongst the stars who shone for brief periods at the Royal were Mr. and Mrs. Charles Mathews, and "the Twin Brothers, Charles and Henry Webb," who, according to the play-bills, were received "every night with roars of laughter in Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*," as the two Dromios. The manager of the Royal evidently believed in giving his patrons a long entertainment at a low price, for we constantly meet with such announcements as:—"Four Stars! Two Dramas! and a Shakespearian Play! Half price to all parts of the Theatre."

In September Irving left Glasgow to join the stock company of the Theatre Royal, Manchester, where he appeared on the 29th of the month in a drama called *The Spy: or, a Government Appointment*, in which Charles Calvert played the part of Michael Perrin with great success. The members of the company then included, in addition to Calvert and Irving, G. F. Sinclair, F. Everill, Clifford Cooper, F. Lloyd, Mrs. Bickerstaff, Miss Henrietta Hodson, Miss Isabel Adams, and Miss Louisa Angel. Early in November the stage of the Royal was occupied on alternate nights by an opera company, of which the chief artists were Grisi and Mario. Amongst the stars who visited the theatre towards the end of the year 1860 were Charles Dillon, who was seen in a version of Victor Hugo's *Ray Blas* and in *Belphegor*, and Mr. and Mrs. Charles Mathews. The Christmas pantomime, *Cinderella*, proved very attractive, and was performed nearly ninety times. On New Year's Day, 1861, no less than three representations of it were given. It was invariably preceded by a play of some kind, such as *A Word in Your Ear*,

and *George Barnwell*, in both of which Irving did well. Between him and Calvert a firm friendship grew up, to which he has alluded in the following terms :

"There is one association connected with my life here that is unknown to but a few in this room. That is an association with a friend which had much to do, I believe, with the future course of our lives. When I tell you that our communions were very grave and very deep, that our friendship was a strong one, and for months and years we fought together, and worked together to the best of our power, and with the means we had then, to give effect to the art we were practising ; when I tell you we dreamt of what might be done, but was not then done, and patted each other on the back and said, ' Well, old fellow, perhaps the day will come when you may have a little more than sixpence in your pocket ' ; when I tell you that that man was well known to you, and that his name was Calvert, you will understand the nature of my associations with Manchester. Our lives were separated even whilst he lived, and our intercourse ceased altogether ; he was working here in Manchester and I was working elsewhere. I have no doubt that you will be able to trace in my own career, and the success I have had, the benefit of the communion I had with him."

At the time to which Irving refers in this speech his salary was about seventy-five pounds a year, with an occasional benefit, which more often than not resulted in a loss of twenty pounds or more.

During the first part of his Manchester engagement, which lasted for nearly five years, Irving worked as hard as when he was in Edinburgh, and his severe labour was not lightened with applause, for he tells us :

"I found it a difficult thing to make my way at all with the audience; and I believe the audience to a certain extent was right: I think there was no reason why I should make my way with them. I don't think I had learnt enough; I think I was too raw, too unacceptable." Gradually, however, by doing the utmost in his power with every part which he was called upon to interpret, Irving won the respect of Manchester play-goers, until at last he gained for himself a distinct place in their affections. In April 1861 he appeared as Charles Darrell in a melodrama called *The Island Home*, which was specially adapted by Calvert for the Theatre Royal from the French play *La Dame de St. Topez*. Two months after he "created"—to use a convenient though unexact expression—the part of Herbert Waverley in a "new comedy" by John Brougham, entitled *Playing with Fire*, which was apparently written in order to display its author's histrionic gifts. In July, Patti made her *début* in opera, in the provinces, at the Manchester theatre, appearing on the first evening of her engagement in *La Sonnambula*. Shortly after, we find that Irving played a small part in *A Signal Engagement*; Mr. Dombey in a version of Dickens's novel; and in a piece called *The Family Secret*, when the critic of the *Guardian* remarked that "Mr. Henry Irving, who has very little to do as young Crawford, does that little well." Distinction was given to the month of October in the annals of the Royal by the appearance of Edwin Booth. The greatest of American tragic actors was seen as Hamlet, Othello, Shylock, Richard III., Romeo, Petruchio, and Sir Giles Overreach. He also played Iago to Calvert's Othello for the first time in England. In nearly all the classical plays in

Booth's *répertoire*, Irving had a part more or less important, and we can imagine how welcome were these performances to a young man who, while dreaming of triumphs in the poetic drama, was condemned to take part in a seemingly endless round of vulgar melodrama and foolish farce.

In the spring of 1862 we find that standard plays are once more in possession of the stage of the Royal, though the impressive figure of Edwin Booth is not to be found amongst the interpreters. His place was taken by Walter Montgomery, who played in *Othello*, *The Hunchback*, in which Irving was Sir Thomas, and in other "legitimate" plays. The play-bill of the 8th of April announces that the performance was for the benefit of Mr. Irving. On this occasion three pieces were acted—the drama, *Nicholas Nickleby* (in which Irving played Nicholas), the farce, *No One Round the Corner*, and a burlesque called *The Maid and the Magpie*. In June, G. V. Brooke—that Boanerges of the Stage, as G. H. Lewes called him—and his wife, Miss Avonia Jones, visited the Royal, and *Macbeth*, *King John*, *As You Like It*, and *Othello* (in which Irving's Cassio was very well received) were produced. After the summer vacation, Falconer's *Peep o' Day* was elaborately mounted, and ran up to Christmas, owing mainly to the ingenuity of the stage-carpenters and the energy of over a hundred well-rehearsed "supers."

Early in 1863 Irving's parts included Fergus Graham in Westland Marston's little drama, *A Hard Struggle*, the Marquis de Mervielle in Maddison Morton's *The Midnight Watch*, and George Barnwell in Lillo's play of that name. In April, W. S. Hyde's *Blanche of Nevers*, a drama with a plot similar to that of *The*

*Duke's Motto*, was staged in lavish style, Miss Nelly Moore playing the heroine and Wybert Rousby and Irving the principal male characters. In May, Walter Montgomery appeared as Hamlet for Irving's benefit, and in the following month G. V. Brooke was again seen at the Theatre Royal in some of his most robust Shakespearian parts. On the 4th of July Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean gave a farewell performance of *The Wife's Secret* before leaving England for Australia. After the summer holiday, Sothern visited Manchester, and, as Lord Dundreary, caused the usual excitement and packed the theatre for over thirty nights. Irving was amongst those who supported Sothern in the farce, *My Aunt's Advice*; but he had no part in *My American Cousin*. When the year 1864 came round, Irving had evidently considerably improved his position at the Royal, for we find that more important parts were entrusted to him. Amongst these were Faust in *Faust and Marguerite*, Claude Melnotte in *The Lady of Lyons*, and Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet*. In reference to the last, the *Era* says: "We have not seen Mr. Irving to better advantage than as Mercutio; he portrayed the part well, and his speech on Queen Mab was loudly applauded; less brusqueness of manner would have improved it."

Irving's Manchester days were drawing to a close; but before he left the city which for so long had been his home, he determined on a bold experiment. If Lowell's saying, "Not failure, but low aim, is crime," may be applied to the art of acting, assuredly Irving, even in his comparatively early days, must be held guiltless. The *Era* of the 19th of June, 1864, contained the following announcement: "On Monday, June 20th,

Mr. Henry Irving will essay for the first time the character of Hamlet for his benefit. Mr. Irving has risen rapidly in the esteem of the play-going public, and doubtless will reap a substantial reward on that evening." Irving's resolution was made in spite of the good-humoured chaff of his comrades, who regarded his attempt to scale the heights of tragedy much as we should look upon an attempt by Mr. Charles Hawtrey to play Macbeth ; but he was so popular with them that they cheerfully set to work to enable him to realize his ambition. Charles Calvert consented to play the ghost, and his wife undertook the part of Ophelia. So far as the audience went, the experiment was astoundingly successful : the theatre was full, and the applause was enthusiastic. The critics, however, were not so easily satisfied, for we read in the *Manchester Guardian* of the 21st of June :

"When a man aims high, it does not always happen that he strikes high. We credit him with the intention and record regretfully that the achievement does not equal it. In the whole range of the dramatic art there is no character that requires loftier and more varied accomplishments for its efficient presentation than that of Hamlet, which was assumed last evening by Mr. Henry Irving on the occasion of his benefit ; and to say that his personation was not such a success as one would wish for an intelligent and studious man, is simply to add his name to a long list of worthy actors who have done well in histrionic spheres, if they have not shone in the highest. A more robust *physique* than Mr. Irving has is wanted to make a Prince of Denmark, and consequently his voice was unequal to the demands which Hamlet makes upon it. This is a



failing which no art can supply. But study can give a greater command over the vocal tones than Mr. Irving displayed ; and by more variety in the intonation and greater clearness, the deficiency in power may be, as it were, hidden, if not compensated. . . . Judging by the applause of a full house, our estimate of the hero's part was not endorsed by the public. Perhaps Mr. Irving was somewhat unnerved at the outset by the earnestness of the welcome that greeted him. He was called before the curtain after every act."

This is evidently written with scrupulous fairness, and in every material point it agrees with the opinion expressed by the critic of the *Manchester Courier*, who wrote :

"Nothing could be more encouraging than the reception given to Mr. Henry Irving last night, when for the first time he stepped upon the stage in the rôle of Hamlet, and throughout the night a generous sympathy with commendable emulation was evinced by a well-filled house, disposed to be considerate as well as critical. Having, perhaps, somewhat unnerved Mr. Irving by an early display of good feeling, it sought to reassure him by calling him before the curtain at the close of each act. The house knew well Mr. Irving's ability in light drama, and scarcely expected an ideal Hamlet from him. It knew beforehand that Mr. Irving was unequal, physically, to the expression of the highest tragic power ; and it therefore judged his efforts by the known strength of the actor, as well as by the comparative success which he attained. Substantially, it attested that, with a more powerful voice that would have suited the word to the action, Mr. Irving, by repetition, would suit the action to the word in the most



critical speeches and scenes of the tragedy. He was best, and perhaps a little too off-hand and easy, in ordinary dialogue, and at times much too hasty for the development of the plot. In the play scene he was too impetuous in approaching the 'King,' who ought to rise discomfited by the play, without having its meaning forcibly applied by 'Hamlet.' At other times, Mr. Irving found it difficult to avoid the gait and mien of comedy, or rather, fell into them from long usage. Such things were to be expected, and they are not mentioned disparagingly. Mr. Irving's conception of the character, whilst capable of emendation by study, was generally good, and his readings, when within his vocal compass, were impressive and effective."

The admirable temper of these criticisms made them especially valuable to a young and ambitious player, for they gave him solid encouragement without holding out to him dangerous hopes. A man who, by common consent, was so intelligent and modest as Henry Irving, cannot have failed to find in them much food for reflection. His performance seems to have appealed strongly to the imagination of Manchester play-goers, for, in compliance with a very general demand, he played *Hamlet* again on the 25th of June. In spite of the absence from the cast of Mr. and Mrs. Calvert, the house was a good one, and it was noticed that the young actor had materially improved his impersonation in several respects.

With the performance of *Hamlet*, Irving's career as a member of the stock company of the Theatre Royal practically ends; but before he left Manchester an event happened which must be described here, more on account of its curiosity than its importance. Towards the end

of 1864, all the credulous people in England, as well as a vast number of persons of average common sense, had worked themselves up into a state of the wildest excitement over the so-called "dark séances" of the notorious Davenport Brothers. The way in which shrewd men and women entertained the outrageous pretensions of this precious couple was simply amazing. Their progress from town to town was a triumph: crowds rushed to see them, and as a result they coined money. The Davenports were introduced to their audiences by a certain Reverend Doctor Fergusson, who, in the matter of impudence, was without a rival amongst the showmen of his time. Prompted by curiosity, Irving, his fellow-actor, Mr. Phillip Day, and Mr. Fred Maccabe, the conjuror, went to see the "occult phenomena" which the brothers professed themselves able to produce. They were all three convinced on the spot that the whole thing was an elaborate swindle, and, after making careful preparations, they decided to expose it. Their first demonstration was given in private at one of the Manchester clubs, and called forth so much interest that they decided to repeat the experiment in more formal fashion before a larger number of persons. The second "séance" was therefore given in the Library Hall of the Manchester Athenæum on the afternoon of the 25th of February, 1865. The parts of the brothers were taken by Mr. Maccabe and Mr. Day, and that of the unctuous Doctor by Henry Irving, who delivered the following preliminary speech:

"Ladies and gentlemen,—In introducing to you our experiments in what we, perhaps, have ostentatiously called 'preternatural philosophy,' I propose to explain to you as briefly as possible how this meeting has taken

place, and the end we have in view in giving this semi-public séance. The performance of the Davenport Brothers was of a nature to fill some minds with wonderment, some to puzzle and perplex, whilst many, who would not own to either, took to derision and laughter. Three gentlemen, two of whom I shall have the honour of introducing to you [the speaker himself was the third], proved exceptions to what appears to have been the rule in the Davenport audiences. They were neither astonished, perplexed, nor bewildered, nor did they content themselves by treating the affair with levity, but, in a matter-of-fact way, they said, 'Here are effects apparently marvellous; there is no effect without a cause; these things are done somehow. If they are done by a supernatural power, we cannot accomplish the same; but if by a natural power, why, then we can also—if we discover the somehow.' Acting upon this, and beginning with the first axiom of Euclid, that the nearest way from one given point to another is by a straight line, they produced a line and proceeded like two philosophers to experiment. The result was a complete knowledge of the 'somehow,' and a full discovery of the trick. At a social gathering some ten days ago, a few friends were amused at a burlesque séance *à la* Davenport, in which I had the rather equivocal honour of impersonating a certain reverend Doctor. The result was so complete a reproduction of all the phenomena, that a committee was formed for the purpose of holding this assembly, in which our object is something more than mere amusement. What do the band of brothers profess to teach? What purpose beyond lining their pockets with money do they desire to obtain? They indignantly decline to be called

conjurors ; and while not venturing to define what was the precise nature of the occult power they professed to exercise, they wished people to understand that they were in some way connected with spiritualism—that, in their own words, they were producing a new hope to all mankind. So, if we can succeed in destroying the blasphemous pretensions of the unlicensed spirit-dealers, our object will be attained, and this meeting will not have been held in vain. I will assume, as well as I am able, the appearance and manner of the Doctor, and endeavour as hastily as possible to introduce him to you as our ‘*media*.’”

Irving then retired for a few minutes, and, reappearing as the double of the reverend and notorious doctor, delivered an address in which the phrascology, accent, gesture, and expression of the showman were reproduced with exquisite and irresistible fidelity. The speech, which was accompanied by a running fire of laughter and cheers, concluded as follows :

“ Many really sensible and intelligent individuals seem to think that the requirement of darkness seems to infer trickery. So it does. But I will strive to convince you that it does not. Is not a dark chamber essential to the process of photography ? What should we reply to him who would say, ‘ I believe photography is a humbug—do it in the light, and we will believe otherwise ! ’ It is true we know why darkness is essential to the production of a sun-picture ; and if scientific men will subject these phenomena to analysis, they will find why darkness is essential to our manifestations (laughter). But we don’t want them to find out—we want them to avoid a common-sense view of the mystery (laughter). We want them to believe, with implicit faith, in the

greatest humbug of the nineteenth century" (loud applause and laughter).

The burlesque brothers then performed all the Davenport miracles in the most approved fashion, the Doctor meanwhile giving utterance from time to time to appropriate criticisms *à la Fergusson*. The "séance" was repeated at the Free Trade Hall, and so great was its success that the manager of the Royal tried to induce Irving to repeat it at the theatre. While he was always ready for a joke in the proper place, he felt that he could not accede to this request without disrespect to the art which he loved so well. His refusal was misunderstood, and was partly the cause of the somewhat abrupt conclusion of his long Manchester engagement.

In spite of his extraordinary experience, Irving found it by no means easy to obtain employment when he left Manchester, and for a time he was literally a strolling player. In the late summer of 1865 he acted at the Prince of Wales's Operetta House, Edinburgh, where, amongst other important parts, he played Robert Macaire for the first time. At the Bury Theatre he repeated his success as Hamlet, and shortly after went to Oxford, where he remained five weeks. From the beginning of September to the middle of November he was the "light comedian and leading juvenile man of the company of the Prince of Wales's Theatre, Birmingham, then under the direction of Mr. Swanborough. Mr. Edgar Pemberton, the well-known local critic and biographer of Sothern, wrote of his performance of Laertes, which he played to Fechter's Hamlet, that it was as bad as bad could be; and Irving seems to have made little impression on Birmingham play-goers,

although his Bob Brierley, in *The Ticket-of-leave Man*, was praised by the critics.

The company moved in November to the St. James's Hall, Liverpool, where a version of *East Lynne*, in which Miss Avonia Jones and Irving played important parts, was produced. A flying visit was paid to Douglas, Isle of Man, the assembly-room serving the purpose of a temporary theatre. On the 15th of January, 1866, Irving joined the Prince of Wales's Company at Liverpool, and made his first appearance as Harry Thorncote in *Only a Clod*. A couple of months later Sothorn produced *The Favourite of Fortune* there for the first time, when, according to one of the critics, "As Fox Bromley, Mr. Irving achieved a decided success, and in the presence of any but so great a star [as Sothorn] he would have been esteemed *the* success of the piece."

If Irving made little appreciable progress towards real distinction and popularity during his long novitiate, his efforts had nevertheless attracted the attention of Dion Boucicault, who, as author, actor, and manager, occupied so large a place in the history of the stage a generation ago. In the summer of 1866 Boucicault arranged to produce a new play, entitled *The Two Lives of Mary Leigh*, at the Prince's Theatre, Manchester, and engaged Irving to "create" the important part of Rawdon Scudamore, an adventurer as villainous in intention as he was polished in speech and manner. The piece was produced on the 30th of July, when Miss Kate Terry played the heroine and Mr. J. C. Cowper the part of John Leigh. The performances of all the principal actors, and especially that of Irving, were warmly commended by the press, but the piece itself



was severely handled. According to one critic, the plot was improbable without being interesting, while the dialogue did not contain a single line worth remembering ; in fact, a good company was utterly wasted in the interpretation of such a play. In spite of this unfavourable verdict, the author received offers for its production in London, and accepted one of them, on condition that Irving was engaged for the part of Rawdon Scudamore.

We have now briefly reviewed Henry Irving's career as a provincial actor. Before he left Edinburgh he played four hundred and twenty-eight speaking parts. To this immense total must be added a hundred and sixty parts played by him between his Edinburgh engagement and his appearance in London in 1866. He had therefore performed nearly six hundred characters before he achieved any measure of distinction on the Metropolitan Stage.



## CHAPTER VI

### LONDON AT LAST

OCTOBER 1866—DECEMBER 1867

IN October 1866, the St. James's Theatre was reopened under the direction of a lady whose stage-name was Miss Herbert. An ambitious and, to a considerable extent, a successful actress, Miss Herbert is now remembered as much for her personal beauty as for her sympathetic and intelligent interpretation of many difficult parts in plays of serious interest. Her face, which was of a rare, spiritual type, appealed irresistibly to some of the earnest young artists who described themselves as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and she inspired several of Rossetti's finest pictures. "It was in or about this year [1859]," writes Mr. W. M. Rossetti, "that my brother made the personal acquaintance of an actress whom he greatly admired for beauty of face and person, and whose professional talents he also appreciated, though less warmly ; her stage-name was Miss Herbert. A letter from Mr. Ruskin expresses a hope that he would soon paint Miss Herbert's head in his picture ; the Llandaff triptych is probably meant." Miss Herbert entered upon management with a high view of the responsibilities of her position, and determined that she would do everything in her power to

achieve an artistic as well as a financial success. She was anxious to revive a selection of the standard plays of the old dramatists in a manner worthy their prestige, as well as to encourage living playwrights by producing such of their efforts as were distinguished by literary merit. For the opening of the theatre she arranged to produce for the first time in London *The Two Lives of Mary Leigh*, which Boucicault had re-christened *Hunted Down*; and, in deference to the wish of the author, she engaged Irving for his original part of Rawdon Scudamore. In addition to this, he was appointed stage-manager, and thus had his first opportunity in an art in which, at the present time, he is, by common consent, without a rival amongst Englishmen. The 6th of the month was fixed upon for the opening of the St. James's, under the new management; but, owing to unforeseen difficulties, it was found impossible to produce Boucicault's drama on that date, and the season therefore commenced with a revival of Mrs. Cowley's comedy, *The Belle's Stratagem*. It was not without considerable misgiving that Irving set to work at short notice to study the part of Doricourt, which was played at Covent Garden on the first production of the piece in February 1780 by William Thomas—otherwise "Gentleman"—Lewis. For an actor totally unknown in London, it was a severe ordeal to make a first appearance in the difficult and unfamiliar character, of which Crofton Croker wrote:

He reigns in comedy supreme, . . .  
None show for light and airy sport  
So exquisite as Doricourt.

As Doricourt, a polished man of the world, who,

having made the "grand tour," came home with the notion that English beauties were insipid, Irving had to follow a number of brilliant comedians, amongst whom not the least accomplished was Charles Kemble. The result of his essay is best told in his own words :

"I had never played the part before, and I thought it did not suit me ; I felt that this was the opinion of the audience soon after the play began. The house appeared to be indifferent, and I believed that failure was conclusively stamped upon my work, when suddenly, upon my exit after the mad scene, I was startled by a burst of applause, and so great was the enthusiasm of the audience, that I was compelled to re-appear upon the scene, a somewhat unusual thing except upon the operatic stage."

Of this part of his impersonation the critic of the *Morning Post* remarked that "in the difficult scene in the third act, in which he affects insanity, he almost tempted the audience to the genuine lunacy of encoring his freak of mock madness." The *Athenæum* declared that "Mr. H. Irving was the 'fine gentleman' in Doricourt ; but he was more, for his mad scenes were truthfully conceived and most subtilly executed." John Oxenford, on the other hand, tells us that these same scenes, so far from being impressive, were received with laughter. The other parts in the revival were capably filled. Miss Herbert, if she lacked the enchanting mirth which, according to Leigh Hunt, made the Letitia Hardy of Mrs. Jordan so charming, played the part with irreproachable taste, while other characters were filled with distinction by Mr. Walter Lacy, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Matthews, Mr. Gaston Murray, and Miss Carlotta Addison, who made her first appearance in

London on this occasion. From Mr. Lacy, Irving received many hints which, coming from an actor of so great experience, could not fail to be of much practical value.

On the 5th of November, *The Belle's Stratagem* gave way to *Hunted Down*, and Irving felt himself on comparatively safe ground. It was improbable that after the favourable reception of Doricourt he should altogether fail in a part in which he had already produced a profound impression on the keenly critical playgoers of Manchester. Boucicault's drama was treated less severely by the London press than by that of the great Lancashire city. According to the *Athenæum*, it even deserved a high place amongst the works of its author :

"The notion of the heroine living two lives—the outer apparently guilty, and the inner really innocent—is one very available for dramatic purposes, and likely to increase the interest of the action. We are not disposed, however, to commend the taste which has placed another story of bigamy on the boards ; more particularly as the present story involves a double transgression of the kind. We have but four persons, and of these one lady has two husbands, and one husband two wives. Of this perplexity the plot is woven, and it rises to an obvious state of distress and emotion, in which the two wives share in equal proportions, thus dividing the interest between them. To compensate, however, for any such oversight, the piece is so delicately written, and otherwise so elegantly constructed, that for finish and effect it must take rank with the best of Mr. Boucicault's dramas. The four persons who bear the weight of the action are John

Leigh, a Royal Academician (Mr. Walter Lacy), Mary Leigh, his wife (Miss Herbert), Rawdon Scudamore, a gambler (Mr. Henry Irving), and Clara, his lawful wife (Miss Ada Dyas)." The impersonation of these four principal parts was almost universally praised. Oxford evidently preferred Irving's Rawdon Scudamore to his Doricourt, for, writing in the *Times*, he says that the part "completely serves the purpose of displaying the talent of Mr. Irving, whose ability in depicting the prevalence of the most malignant feelings, merely by dint of facial expression, is very remarkable." It is interesting to note that several dramatic critics, who are happily still with us, wrote notices of the first performance of *Hunted Down*. Amongst them the best known are perhaps Mr. Joseph Knight, Mr. Clement Scott, Mr. John Hollingshead, and Mr. Arthur William à Beckett. The last-mentioned has recently given us an account of the evening, in which he says:—"Although my impressions of the play are vague and blurred, I can see Henry Irving as the most admirable stage-villain—cool, calm, and implacable—and Ada Dyas as his suffering wife. They stand before me as I write, two distinct figures. Of the rest of the piece, I repeat, I remember next to nothing." Dickens expressed himself enthusiastically about Irving's Rawdon Scudamore, and laid great stress on the "singular power" of the impersonation.

*Hunted Down* proved fairly successful, but its popularity was exhausted by the 9th of February, 1867, when it was replaced by a revival of Holcroft's comedy *The Road to Ruin*. Lacy played Charles Goldfinch, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Matthews were Old Dornton and Widow Warren respectively, Irving was decidedly good as Harry

Dornton, and Miss E. Bufton played Sophia in place of Miss Herbert, who was indisposed. Strong as this cast was, it can hardly be compared to that of the first production of the piece at Covent Garden in 1792, when Goldfinch was played by Lewis, Harry Dornton by Holman, and Sophia by Mrs. Merry; while Munden, immortalised by Charles Lamb, was brilliant as Old Dornton. Early in March an adaptation of Sardou's *Le Dégal* by T. W. Robertson, entitled *A Rapid Thaw*, was produced. The piece opened in promising fashion, but as it proceeded it became duller and duller, and the first-night audience gave it a decidedly mixed reception. Irving was seen as the O'Hooligan, an Irish adventurer, of the stage, stagey. Later in the month, *The School for Scandal* and *Robert Macaire* were revived. In the former Irving played Joseph Surface, and in the latter the title-part. On the 22nd of April a new drama by George Roberts, called *Idalia*, which was founded on Ouida's novel of that name, was acted. The piece was well received, and three of the performers, Miss Herbert, Charles Wyndham, and Irving, were warmly and generally congratulated. As Count Falcon, the last-named, according to the *Era*, was "consistent, eminently picturesque, and highly polished." Great efforts were made to mount *Idalia* in the most realistic manner. The result on the first night was somewhat disastrous, for a tank of water overflowed and flooded the stage, much to the discomfort of the unfortunate players, and the amusement of the audience. At the end of May a performance of *Hunted Down* was given for Irving's benefit. After Boucicault's play, *My Aunt's Advice* was acted, Sothorn playing Captain Leslie, and Irving Charles Arundell. A few days later *Lady Audley's*



*Secret* was given for Miss Herbert's benefit, when Irving appeared as Robert Audley. A week later he played Charles Torrens in *The Serious Family* at a performance given in aid of the funds of the Universal Benevolent Society. At the end of the season the St. James's Company went on a short provincial tour. In July, Irving, with his friends Edward Saker and John T. Raymond, went to Paris to support Sothorn, who was playing Dundreary at the Théâtre des Italiens. The part assigned to Irving was that of the drunken lawyer's clerk, Abel Murcott. In spite of the fact that Napoleon III. visited the theatre and applauded the English actors in a most demonstrative fashion, the piece was received coldly by the Parisian public, and the critics dismissed Dundreary contemptuously as *un sort de snob*. This is the first and last time that Irving has played in Paris. One cannot but regret that he has not been seen in what, in things theatrical, is the capital of the world, in a *répertoire* such as that in which Macready appeared in 1844, when he called forth the enthusiasm of Gautier, George Sand, Dumas, Victor Hugo, and others who have made modern French literature what it is. If such an experiment had been undertaken, it would certainly have enabled us more clearly to determine Irving's rank as an actor.

In the late autumn of 1867, Irving returned to the Princess's and reappeared on the 16th of October in an adaptation entitled *The Widow Hunt*, by Stirling Coyne, of his own comedy, *Everybody's Friend*. This piece was produced in order to introduce the American comedian J. S. Clarke to London play-goers. His performance of Major Wellington de Boots caught the



fancy of the public, and the piece ran to the end of the year. It was preceded by *Only a Clod*, in which Irving again played Harry Thornecote. In November he was seen with Miss Ada Cavendish in *A Story of Providence* and *The School for Reform*. The following month his connection with the St. James's came to an end. If, during his engagement there, he had achieved nothing which could be described as a triumph, he had won for himself a respectable place in the esteem of the judicious as an actor at once painstaking and intelligent.

## CHAPTER VII

### AT THE QUEEN'S THEATRE, LONG ACRE

DECEMBER 1867—JUNE 1869

IN October 1867, St. Martin's Hall, Long Acre, after being reconstructed, was opened as the Queen's Theatre. The decoration of the new play-house was entrusted to Mr. Albert Moore, whose designs for the front of the boxes, galleries, and proscenium, were altogether worthy of one of the most exquisite of Victorian artists. The Queen's was nominally under the direction of Mr. Alfred Wigan, but it was an open secret that the actual lessee was Mr. Labouchere, whose career as a theatrical manager is now forgotten in his wider fame as journalist and politician. The company engaged for the opening of the new theatre included, besides Alfred Wigan and his wife, Charles Wyndham, Lionel Brough, John Clayton, Miss Ellen Terry, Miss Henrietta Hodson (afterwards Mrs. Labouchere), and Miss Nellie Farren, then a new recruit. On Boxing Day this powerful company was still further strengthened by the accession to its ranks of Henry Irving and J. L. Toole. Irving's first appearance was made as Petruchio in *Katherine and Petruchio*, a stage version of *The Taming of the Shrew*, made for Woodward and

Kitty Clive by Garrick, in 1754. The occasion is extremely interesting from the fact that Kate of Padua was played by Miss Ellen Terry, who then acted with the future master of the Lyccum for the first time. In one of her delightful papers called *Stray Memories*, Miss Terry gives us her impressions of the event:

"I fancy we neither of us played very well. From the first I noticed that Mr. Irving worked more concentratedly than all the other actors put together, and the most important lesson of my working life I learnt from him, that to do one's work well, one must *work continually*, live a life of constant self-denial for that purpose, and, in short, keep one's nose upon the grindstone. It is a lesson one had better learn early in stage life, I think, for the bright, glorious, healthy career of a successful actor is but brief at the best. There is an old story told of Mr. Irving being 'struck with my talent at this time, and promising that if he ever had a theatre of his own he'd give me an engagement'! But that is all moonshine. As a matter of fact, I'm sure he never thought of me at all at that time. I was just then acting very badly, and feeling ill, caring scarcely at all for my work or a theatre, or anybody belonging to a theatre."

The critics seem to have been better satisfied with Miss Terry's Catherine than she was herself. Her impersonation was treated with great respect by Oxenford, who, however, strongly disapproved of Irving's reading of Petruchio. "Mr. Irving," he wrote in *The Times*, "who made his *début* at the St. James's Theatre about a twelvemonth since, is a very valuable actor, and the manager of the new Queen's has shown great

judgment in securing his services. His representation of the gamester in Mr. Boucicault's *Hunted Down*—an excellent piece, never appreciated according to its deserts—and the drunkenness of despair proper to Harry Dornton in the latter portion of *The Road to Ruin*, were in their way perfect; but Petruchio is just one of those parts which apparently he cannot hit. Those who are old enough to recollect the late Mr. Charles Kemble's Petruchio will easily bring to mind the gentlemanlike rollick with which he carried off the extravagances of the shrew-tamer, showing that at bottom he was a man of high breeding, though for the nonce he found it expedient to behave like a ruffian. No impression of this kind is left by Mr. H. Irving. His early scenes are feeble, and when he has brought home his bride he suggests the notion rather of a brigand chief who has secured a female captive than of an honest gentleman engaged in a task of moral reform. Moreover, before he takes his position as a speaker of blank verse, certain defects of articulation require emendation." It may well be that Oxenford's strictures were deserved, although several critics found much to praise in the new Petruchio. It is difficult to imagine that the business of shrew-taming was congenial to a man of Irving's temperament, and one is not inclined to regret that he has never revived a play which, whatever its merits, is inclined to be too much in the nature of a glorification of an ugly form of brute force.

On the 8th of January, 1868, H. J. Byron's *Dearer than Life*, which had been previously tried in Liverpool, was produced at the Queen's, and was so well received that it ran for three months. Its success was due in no

small measure to the fine acting of Toole, Brough, and Irving, the last of whom played Bob Gassitt, and, according to *The Athenæum*, "raised by skilful acting this part, not at all attractive in itself, to singular prominence, compelling the recognition of it as the type of a class."

Early in April a play by John Oxenford, founded on Dickens's *Oliver Twist*, was seen for the first time, and secured greater popularity than it deserved, owing to admirable acting. Lionel Brough was Bumble, Ryder played Fagin, and Toole "the Artful Dodger"; while Miss Hodson appeared as Oliver, and Miss Nelly Moore as Nancy. As Bill Sykes, Irving, whose "make-up" closely followed George Cruikshank's well-known drawing, gave a terribly realistic representation of savage ferocity, which materially added to his slowly growing reputation. In addition to being one of the leading players in the company at the Queen's Theatre, Irving was stage-manager, and on the 1st of June he had a benefit, when he played Charles Surface in *The School for Scandal*. The cast included W. H. Stephens as Sir Peter Teazle, John Clayton as Benjamin Backbite, Alfred Wigan as Joseph Surface, Lionel Brough as Crabtree, Toole as Moses, and Miss Nellie Moore, Miss H. Hodson, and Mrs. Alfred Wigan as Lady Teazle, Lady Sneerwell, and Mrs. Candour respectively. On the 5th of the same month Irving played Cool in *London Assurance* at an afternoon performance at the Haymarket in aid of the funds of the Royal Dramatic College. It is interesting to compare the cast on this occasion with that which played a portion of Boucicault's play at the Lydia Thomson benefit last May (1899) at the Lyceum :

## LONDON ASSURANCE.

1868.

1899.

<i>Sir Harcourt Courtley</i> .	BENJAMIN WEBSTER	. CYRIL MAUDE.
<i>Max Harkaway</i> .	MR. ADDISON . . .	JAMES FERNANDEZ.
<i>Dazzle</i> . . .	CHARLES MATHEWS .	CHARLES WYNDHAM.
<i>Charles Courtley</i> .	E. A. SOTHERN . .	HERBERT WARING.
<i>Dolly Spanker</i> .	J. B. BUCKSTONE .	WEEDON GROSSMITH.
<i>Cool</i> . . .	HENRY IRVING . .	CHARLES HAWTREY.
<i>Pert</i> . . .	MRS. KEELEY . . .	KATE CUTLER.
<i>Grace Harkaway</i> .	NELLY MOORE . . .	MARY MOORE.
<i>Lady Gay Spanker</i>	MRS. CHARLES MATHEWS.	MRS. LANGTRY.

If one cannot honestly say that the advantage lies with the recent cast, it is at all events a far from insignificant one, even when subjected to a very severe comparison.

On the 8th of July Irving played Faulkland in a revival of *The Rivals* at the Queen's, his principal companions being Mr. and Mrs. Wigan, John Clayton, and Charles Wyndham. With the last-named Irving was already on terms of close friendship, to which in a recent speech the manager of the Criterion has thus feelingly referred :

"I am sure you will share my grief at the news to-day of Sir Henry Irving's illness and inability to appear. To myself, associated, as I have been, with him all my life, the wrench, however temporary, is a bitter one. Together as young men we tramped along the stormy, tortuous path of broken hopes ; together we mounted the preferable slopes of realization ; and now, in the harvest of our ambitions, it is sad to miss one's fellow-gleaner from one's side, even for a day. You join with me, I know, in sincere wishes for the speedy recovery of that great actor and good man."

It is pleasant to read of such a lifelong friendship

as this in a profession the successful members of which are too often represented as consumed with envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness in respect of one another. But, truth to tell, the life of Irving has been gladdened by friendships not a few, which, begun in early days, have by no means grown less as he has gradually achieved his splendid position as the leading English actor of his time.

The next important production at the Queen's was thus severely dealt with in *The Athenæum* of August 1 : "The reverse of the rule which decrees that in matters of taste the opinions of a cultivated minority shall in time become those of the majority, holds true of theatrical affairs. An inundation from below has swamped the tastes of the upper and educated classes, and entertainments once characteristic of popular and suburban theatres are now exhibited at almost all West End houses. Seldom has the theatrical look-out been less satisfactory than at present. To the St. James's Mlle. Schneider's extravagances and improprieties have attracted more fashionable audiences than the theatrical annals of the present generation can parallel. At the Holborn Amphitheatre trapeze performances, the most dangerous and disgusting yet exhibited, are nightly witnessed by crowds. At the Queen's—a house opened avowedly for the production of comedy and high-class drama—a melodrama of almost unexampled extravagance and absurdity is being performed. *The Lancashire Lass* is the title of Mr. H. J. Byron's play, in four acts and a prologue. In the opening of this piece some signs of an attempt at characterization are traceable ; but after this preliminary amble Mr. Byron falls into the jog-trot of melodrama. One after another



the familiar characters shuffle on the scene. First comes the village maiden; a fashionable seducer and a rustic lover follow; and a little in the background stand the heroine's rival and her broken-hearted father. When to these characters are added a rich and honoured merchant, who is a returned convict; a second convict, poor and unscrupulous, drawing from his former associate large sums of money as the price of secrecy;—the materials for melodrama are complete. Throw into this brewage a sprinkling of detectives, bush-rangers, and the like, to make the gruel thick and slab, and one may predict how the whole will work."

In the melodrama thus condemned, Irving played Robert Redburn, a gentlemanly villain of polished manners, such as Mr. Abingdon has shown us so frequently at the Adelphi; and other parts were played by Charles Wyndham, Sam Emery, H. W. Montgomery, Lionel Brough, and John Clayton. *The Lancashire Lass* had a good run, and, in spite of its faults, it has been frequently revived, notably at the Princess's in 1875.

On the 13th of February, 1869, a drama dealing with convict life by Watts Phillips, called *Not Guilty*, was produced for the first time. In this piece Sam Emery and Miss Hodson both played double parts, and Irving "created" the rôle of Robert Arnold. In March he appeared as young Marlow to the Miss Hardcastle of Miss Heath in *She Stoops to Conquer*, at a performance given for Lionel Brough's benefit. On the 19th of the month his own benefit took place, when he played Henri de Neuville in *Plot and Passion*. A few days previous, he took the part of Brown in *The Spitalfields Weaver*, at a *matinée* at Drury Lane, in aid of the sufferers from the fire at the Theatre Royal,

Hull. His engagement at the Queen's was now near its end. Before he left he played Victor Dubois in *Ici on Parle Français*, and John Pecrybingle in *Dot*; but he did nothing which materially increased his reputation. In spite of the variety of his experience and his long years of arduous work, Irving, when he left the company of the Queen's, had not achieved emphatic distinction. He was known as a sound and painstaking actor of marked intelligence, and nothing more. As we shall see in the next chapter, he was, however, on the threshold of fame.

During the year 1869, Henry Irving married Florence, daughter of Surgeon-General Daniel James O'Callaghan, of the Indian Army. The eldest son of this marriage is well known to play-goers as one of the most promising actors of the day. To historical literature he has contributed a monograph on Judge Jeffreys, in which he has sought to prove that that notorious personage was not so black as he has been painted. Of the second son, Mr. Laurence Irving, something will be said in another part of this record.



*London Stereoscopic Co., photo.]*

H. B. IRVING.



## CHAPTER VIII

### AT THE GAIETY AND VAUDEVILLE

JULY 1869—JUNE 1871

FROM the long and satisfactory engagement at the Queen's Theatre, Irving passed to a brief and profitless one at the Haymarket. On the 12th of July, 1869, he appeared as Captain Robert Fitzhubert in a new play by Miss R. G. Le Thièrè, entitled *All for Money*. The piece was produced by Miss Amy Sedgwick, who played the principal character ; but from the first it was obvious that the experiment was a hopeless one, for the drama and its interpretation were alike universally condemned.

Soon after this fiasco Irving joined the Drury Lane company. On the 5th of August *Formosa*, a new melodrama by the prolific Dion Boucicault, was produced, in which the part of Compton Kerr, a gentleman-like scamp of the deepest dye, was assigned to Irving, doubtless in consideration of his success as Robert Redbarn, and in other parts of a similar kind. The play met with a mixed reception at the hands of the critics, on account of its somewhat questionable subject-matter. The heroine, if heroine she may be called, was found to bear a strong likeness to the glorified *demi-mondaine*

with whom the younger Dumas has made us familiar in *La Dame aux Camélias*. Further exception was taken to the piece on the more reasonable ground that it was little more than a paraphrase of the author's own *Flying Scud*; but in spite of this, it ran nearly up to Christmas, when it was taken out of the bill in order that preparations for the pantomime might be made. The part of Compton Kerr cannot have filled Irving with lively enthusiasm, for it gave him no scope for original treatment. Kerr was a machine-made stage villain, and could only be played in a strictly conventional way. It is not surprising, therefore, that before the end of the run Irving was heartily sick of his share in *Formosa*. His release from a very uncongenial engagement was effected by Mr. John Hollingshead, who was then controlling the destinies of the Gaiety Theatre, which is so inseparably connected with his name. In *Gaiety Chronicles* Mr. Hollingshead gives us the following account of the matter:

"Mr. Henry Irving had still his commanding position to make. He was playing a flashy part at Drury Lane Theatre in Dion Boucicault's drama of *Formosa*—a play which encouraged the celebrated pronouncement that 'Shakespeare spelt ruin and Byron bankruptcy.' It was getting near pantomime time, and *Formosa* was within a fortnight of its withdrawal. Irving was anxious to play in *Uncle Dick's Darling*, and to be amongst friends. I had known him for ten years, and had known Toole much longer. I had written a farce for Toole (*The Birthplace of Podgers*), which he produced in 1858 at the Lyceum, and afterwards revived at the New Adelphi. I had some slight influence with Mr. F. B. Chatterton, the manager of Drury Lane



Theatre, and after a little negotiation I got Irving released from his *Formosa* engagement."

*Uncle Dick's Darling*, by H. J. Byron, was produced with great success in the presence of the Prince of Wales on the 13th of December, with the following cast :

#### UNCLE DICK'S DARLING.

<i>Dick Dolland (a cheap jack)</i> . . .	MR. J. L. TOOLE.
<i>Mr. Chenevix.</i> . . . .	MR. HENRY IRVING.
<i>Hon. Claude Lorimer</i> . . . .	MR. H. R. TEESDALE.
<i>Jeo. Leonard (a blacksmith)</i> . . .	MR. J. CLAYTON.
<i>Mrs. Porrington</i> . . . .	MISS MARIA ELSWORTHY.
<i>Alice Renshaw</i> . . . .	MISS LITTON.
<i>Kate Landrail</i> . . . .	MISS L. HENRIE.
<i>A Servant</i> . . . .	MISS A. HERBERT.
<i>Mary Belton</i> . . . .	MISS NEILSON.

Mr. Hollingshead accounts for the success of *Uncle Dick's Darling* in thoroughly characteristic fashion. "It was a clever play," he tells us, "made up of familiar materials, not cursed with any daring originality. It was made by a good stage carpenter with well-seasoned wood." In addition, it had the inestimable benefit of admirable acting, for Toole was seen at his best as Uncle Dick, while no more enchanting "Darling" than Adelaide Neilson could possibly have been found. Of Irving's performance Mr. Hollingshead tells us :

"The part he played in *Uncle Dick* (Mr. Chenevix) might have been moulded upon Mr. Dombey, and in his representation he foreshadowed another part (Digby Grant), in which he afterwards made a great success at another and adjoining theatre—the Vaudeville. He made himself up into a slight resemblance of Mr. Benjamin Disraeli; and Mr. John Clayton, who played

the "Blacksmith," was facetiously described in one of the comic papers as the 'Prince of Wales in corduroys.'"

It is either a striking coincidence, or else evidence that Irving was still so far from being widely known, that his name was mis-spelt in two of the leading newspapers in their notices of this play. *The Daily News* called him Mr. Troning, and *The Globe* docked the name of its final consonant. Moreover, he is not included in the list of leading actors published in *The Era Almanack* for 1869, the only Irving mentioned being Joseph Henry Irving, who made his first appearance in London at the Haymarket as Narcissus Fritzrizzle in *The Dancing Barber* in 1866. But with his performance of Mr. Reginald Chenevix, Henry Irving emerged definitely and finally from comparative obscurity into the full light of day. He was no longer merely a useful player, who could be trusted to do whatever he undertook with his might: he was an actor who had separated himself from the crowd of more or less capable mediocrities to which the majority of the practitioners of any art belong. It was agreed that he had exhibited something more than a command of the technical resources of his craft. He gave a hint of that masterful and fascinating personality, the possession of which not even his least friendly critics will question. Irving's Chenevix possessed that breadth, so difficult to define, and yet so easy to appreciate, which comes of imagination and intellectual force. And it had the exquisite finish born of infinite carefulness. There was nothing thin or lean about it. The actor had seen the character and seen it whole, and had realized it richly and fully. In this relation it is far more accurate than usual to say that he had created it. To the playwright he owed the

dry bones: himself covered them with flesh and put the breath of life into the whole. The critics were so unanimous as to the merits of Irving's impersonation that their verdict amounted to positive congratulation. To the subtle and polished Chenevix, Toole's Uncle Dick, by reason of its unaffected pathos, proved an admirable foil.

During the run of Byron's play, Dickens paid his only visit to the Gaiety. He witnessed the performance from the Royal box, and was received with such marks of distinction as are generally accorded only to Royal personages. He was pleased with the piece which was so obviously inspired by his own work, and remarked that the character of Mr. Chenevix was evidently modelled upon Dombey. Of Irving's interpretation he spoke with unstinted praise, prophesying for him a great career. In relation to *Uncle Dick's Darling*, Toole, in his volume of *Reminiscences*, writes :

"I always enjoyed playing Uncle Dick, and should enjoy it still more if I had my original Chenevix back ; not that Billington does not make a capital Chenevix, but my early associations with Irving in the part are so pleasant that, somehow, I always feel there is a kind of blank in the piece. Of course, this is only a bit of personal sentiment, and the audience knows nothing of it ; it makes no difference to my acting, unless it may unconsciously add to the sentimental interest of the part."

Byron's play ran until April 1870, when Irving left the Gaiety Company to appear in a new piece at a brand new theatre. On the 16th the Vaudeville, under the triple management of H. J. Montague, David James, and Thomas Thorne, opened its doors with a performance of Andrew Halliday's *For Love or Money*,

a slender though agreeable little play, obviously inspired by Robertson. Montague, George Honey, who distinguished himself as Major Buncomb, W. H. Stephens, Miss Amy Fawsitt, who was Jemima the heroine, Miss Louise Clare, and Miss Ada Cavendish, were the chief companions of Henry Irving, who played Alfred Skimmington. The part was so unsubstantial that the actor had no real character to delineate; but he gave a clever sketch of a sanguine impostor who, though nominally affluent, with an income of £5,000 a year, is actually beset with all sorts of debts, duns, and difficulties.

It was soon to be Henry Irving's good fortune to interpret, in a play of much greater value than *For Love or Money*, a part really worthy of his powers. On the 4th of June, 1870, *Two Roses*, a comedy by James Albery, was produced for the first time. The author was almost an unknown writer, for his adaptation from the French, entitled *Doctor Davy*, had brought him nothing like wide celebrity. It is to the credit of dramatic criticism that *Two Roses* received an enthusiastic welcome. As we read them at the present time, the prophecies and panegyrics which it called forth sound a little wild; but it is not wonderful that, in those dull and unproductive days, *Two Roses* was mistaken for a masterpiece. In spite of weakness of construction, the piece was delicately and subtly humorous. While it owed something to Robertson, it was unmistakably stamped with the individuality of the author. If Mr. Albery failed to write a play which was beautiful in all its parts, he conclusively proved that he had a very remarkable gift for inventing separate episodes which were pretty, fanciful, and at times even strikingly



IRVING AS "DIGBY GRANT" IN "TWO ROSES" (ACT I.).

*From a drawing by F. Barnard.*





effective. And three of the chief characters, Digby Grant, Caleb Deecie, and Our Mr. Jenkins are happily imagined, and drawn with a firm and skilful hand. It was by the interpretation of the first of them that Henry Irving won for himself a place in the front rank of living comedians. The promise shown in Mr. Chenevix was splendidly fulfilled. A portion at least of the player's ambition was realized; he was thenceforth a considerable personage in the economy of the Stage. Digby Grant is a brazen-faced liar and an insolent blackguard, but he is a liar and blackguard of a most plausible kind. He possesses in a high degree the gift of preserving appearances, whilst yielding to the basest motives. Proud as Lucifer, he is as impecunious as Mr. Micawber. His principles are for ever at the mercy of his fortunes; he regards the acknowledgment of a debt as equal to its repayment; he accepts a loan with the air of conferring a favour. To all appearance he is harmless as a dove, and possesses a well-bred, a quasi-aristocratic air, which commands respect. Irving showed this half-repulsive but undeniably amusing character with the most exquisite art. About his Digby Grant there was no suspicion of exaggeration; on the contrary, reticence and reserve were the leading attributes of his performance. There was nothing meretricious or showy about it. It was mature and rich and mellow. On the first production of *Two Roses* the actor's work was received with temperate enthusiasm, but at the end of the long run of the play it was far more keenly appreciated. The original cast was a very strong one, stronger than it was when the comedy was revived at the Lyceum on the 26th of December, 1881. I place the two together for comparison.

## TWO ROSES.

*Vaudeville, 1870.**Lyceum, 1881.*

<i>Mr. Digby Grant</i>	. MR. HENRY IRVING	. MR. HENRY IRVING.
<i>Mr. Furnival</i>	. MR. W. H. STEPHENS	. MR. H. HOWE.
<i>Jack Wyatt</i>	. MR. H. J. MONTAGUE	. MR. WILLIAM TERRISS.
<i>Caleb Deecie</i>	. MR. THOMAS THORNE	. MR. GEORGE ALEXANDER.
<i>Our Mr. Jenkins</i>	. MR. GEORGE HONEY	. MR. DAVID JAMES.
<i>Ida</i>	. MISS A. NEWTON	. MISS HELEN MATTHEWS.
<i>Mrs. Cupps</i>	. MISS PHILLIPS	. MISS E. EWELL.
<i>Our Mrs. Jenkins</i>	. MISS T. LAVIS	. MISS PAUNCEFORT.
<i>Lottie</i>	. MISS AMY FAWSITT	. MISS WINIFRED EMERY.

The revival of Mr. Albery's play at the Lyceum was scarcely so successful as might be expected. The "Two Roses" had lost something of their fragrance; the play was too slight, too delicate, for such a vast stage, and its interpretation left something to be desired. Irving's Digby Grant remained a masterly creation. In the opinion of Mr. Clement Scott it was better than it had ever been. "Mr. Irving's Digby Grant," he wrote, "was always an excellent performance, but never so worthy of study and analysis as now, never so free from the defects and temptations that arise out of successful performances. For we all know so many of the signs and idiosyncrasies of Digby Grant, his allusion to the 'little cheque,' his reiterated phrase, 'You annoy me very much,' and so on; yet Mr. Irving seemed to deliver them last evening with new variety, not as if they were catch-words at all, with nothing of the stage in them, but the testy expressions of such a man as this Digby Grant might have been. Mr. Henry Irving, in voice and in manner, was Digby Grant. His own individuality had disappeared."

The rest of the interpreters of Mr. Albery's play did not compare favourably with their predecessors. As



IRVING AS "DIGBY GRANT" IN "TWO ROSES" (ACT II.).

*From a drawing by F. Barnard.*



Caleb Deecie, Mr. George Alexander made his first appearance in London. The actor-manager who has made the record of the St. James's so memorable in recent years was at the time an obscure provincial player of slight experience. Born at Reading in 1858, Mr. Alexander began life in the City, but soon gave up a commercial for a theatrical career. He made his *début* at the Theatre Royal, Nottingham, in 1879, and toured the provinces in Robertsonian comedy. In Caleb Deecie he had a part for which he was ill-suited. His successes have been made in characters of a very different kind. Mr. Terriss, Miss Winifred Emery, and Miss Helen Matthews, did not make one forget H. J. Montague, Miss Amy Fawsitt, and Miss Newton. On the other hand, Mr. Howe as Mr. Furnival, and Mr. David James as Our Mr. Jenkins, were excellent.

The two hundred and ninety-first night of the original run of *Two Roses* was a memorable one in Irving's career, for he then recited *The Dream of Eugene Aram* for the first time. It is difficult to exaggerate the sensation caused by this thrilling performance. It must be remembered that Irving was universally regarded as a comedian of limited range. Suddenly, without the aid of accessories, by the mere recitation of a well-known poem, he revealed a gift of tragic suggestion the existence of which nobody suspected. The triumph of Mathias was thus strangely foreshadowed. From that moment it became indiscreet to prophesy what the "accomplished comedian" could or could not do,—the scope of his art was indefinitely widened. Some of Irving's hearers were so impressed that they went to comical lengths in praise of the recitation. "Even imaginative and sensitive readers," wrote Lady Pollock,

“fail to find in silent study the passion which the actor develops in Thomas Hood’s poem; the agony of a terrible remorse is struck deep into the heart of the listener; any one among the audience who held a guilty secret would surely *give it up or die*.” It is not surprising that Edward Fitzgerald playfully protested, in one of his delightful letters, against this extravagant criticism. For nearly thirty years Irving has recited *The Dream of Eugene Aram* at intervals; and while his performance has long since lost the attraction of novelty, it still thrills the hearer with undiminished intensity. It is more than a recitation: it is a tragedy in miniature.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE STORY OF THE LYCEUM THEATRE

THE Lyceum Theatre is so inseparably connected with the remainder of this narrative that, before we begin to follow Henry Irving's fortunes there, we will trace briefly the history of the play-house, which, under his direction, has so long occupied the first place amongst the theatres of England. There have been three Lyceums on nearly the same site. The first was built in 1765 by James Payne, an architect of considerable repute in his day, for the annual exhibitions of the "Incorporated Society of British Artists," a body from which the Royal Academy ultimately sprang. When the Incorporated Society had ceased to be, the premises were sold to a Strand breeches-maker named Lingham, who let them for all kinds of shows and entertainments. In 1783 "an Acrostatical Globe of ten feet in diameter" was on view there. A few months later the Montgolfier balloon was the attraction, and this gave place in its turn to a waxwork show described as "a Cabinet of Royal figures, most curiously moulded in wax as large as Nature." In 1790 and 1791 Charles Dibdin gave his musical and variety entertainments, *Sans Souci* and *The Oddities, or Dame Nature in a Frolic*, and Moses Kean, the tailor and ventriloquist, an uncle (not brother)

of the meteoric Edmund, likewise appeared there. Somewhere about 1794, the musician Dr. Arnold re-built the back part of the premises as a small theatre ; but owing to the determined opposition of the managers of Drury Lane and Covent Garden, the patent houses, he was unable to obtain a licence, and the building was once more given over to miscellaneous entertainments. The attractions were of the most varied kind, including at different times Astley's circus, a "white negro-girl," Cartwright's once famous "Musical Glasses," a "porcupine man," a "Theatre of Astronomy," and Madame Tussaud's wax-works. An amateur performance of Otway's *Venice Preserved* was given in April 1806, and was, perhaps, the first play performed on the stage of the original Lyceum.

Fire, that relentless foe of play-houses, indirectly secured temporarily for the Lyceum the much-coveted licence. On the 24th of February, 1809, Drury Lane was burnt down, and "Their Majesties' Servants" consequently found themselves without a home. Their eyes naturally turned to the neighbouring Lyceum, and, having decided to occupy it while their own theatre was being re-built, a full licence was obtained without further difficulty. The company from the Lane made their first appearance at the Lyceum, which had been enlarged and re-decorated for the occasion, on the 11th of April, in Coleman's play, *John Bull*, which was followed by a farce entitled *The Prize*. In 1810 the Lyceum was re-christened the English Opera House. Two years later Drury Lane was ready for occupation, and the performances of the company during the winter seasons at the Lyceum of course ceased. In the summer months the stage was occupied by representations of

English opera, for which Samuel James Arnold, son of the musician, obtained a special licence. Amongst the more notable productions were Monk Lewis's once popular, but now forgotten, operatic melodrama, *One O'Clock, or the Knight and the Wood Demon*, and Tom Moore's single dramatic essay, *M.P., or the Blue Stocking*, which was in the nature of comic opera.

Towards the end of the year 1815 a clean sweep was made of the original Lyceum and the adjacent buildings, and the work of reconstruction was begun early in the following year. The foundation-stone of the second Lyceum or English Opera House was laid on the 20th of January, 1816, by the wife of the proprietor. Mr. Michael Williams, in *Some London Theatres Past and Present*, tells us that a copper tablet attached to the stone bore the following inscription :

### English Opera House.

The first ENGLISH OPERA HOUSE was established  
for the encouragement of Native Talent by  
SAMUEL JAMES ARNOLD, in the year 1809,  
under the immediate patronage of

HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE THE THIRD.

And the first stone of this New Theatre was  
laid by his Wife, MATILDA CAROLINE ARNOLD,  
on the 20th of January, 1816, in the  
Fifty-sixth year of his MAJESTY'S reign.

The new theatre opened on the 15th of June, when an inaugural address was spoken by Miss Kelly, for a long while the bright particular star of the English Opera House—who is familiar to readers of Charles Lamb as “Barbara S——.” The company was a strong

one, and included Wallack, Harley, Dowton, Mrs. Orger, and Miss Poole, some of whom were seen on the opening night in the opera *Up all Night, or the Smuggler's Cave*, and the musical farce *The Boarding House*. The theatrical licence only extended from the 1st of July to the month of October, and in the winter, variety entertainments were seen at the theatre. In 1818 Mathews the elder appeared in his famous *At Homes*. The enormous success of these entertainments is not wonderful when we remember that the entertainer, according to Boaden, was "a comic world in one," while Horace Smith declares that "there was but one Charles Mathews in the world—there can never be such another! Mimics, buffoons, jesters, wags, and even admirable comedians, we shall never want; but what are the best of them compared to *him*?"

Again, Lord Byron tells us that Mathews "seems to have continuous chords in his mind that vibrate to those in the minds of others, as he gives, not only the tones and manners of the persons he personifies, but their very trains of thinking, and the expressions they indulge in."

In August 1818 a "romantic melodrama" by Planché, entitled *The Vampire, or the Lord of the Isles*, was produced, and it afforded T. P. Cooke, who had recently joined the company, the opportunity of a great success in the principal character.

The two following years do not seem to have been particularly eventful, but in January 1821 Mrs. Glover was seen as Hamlet, while somewhat later the first stage version of *Guy Mannering*, then a new and popular novel, was produced, Miss Kelly playing Meg Merrilies. On the 19th of April, 1822, Benjamin Charles Incledon,

the "English Ballad-Singer," as he loved to call himself, was accorded a benefit. The occasion is memorable from the fact that Madame Vestris made her first appearance on a stage upon which she was destined to reign for a long time as absolute queen. In 1823 Keeley appeared for the first time at this theatre in a new and somewhat stupid piece called *The Swinging Bridge*. The actor, of whom G. H. Lewes wrote: "His handsome, pleasant features, set in a large, fat face; his beetling brow and twinkling eye; his rotund little body, neither ungraceful nor inactive;—at once prepossessed the spectator; and his unctuous voice and laugh completed the conquest":—speedily became a favourite with his audiences.

The most successful piece produced during the year was *Presumption, or the Fate of Frankenstein*. As Mrs. Shelley's monster, Cooke exceeded himself in the delineation of the horrid and repellent, and his performance became the rage of London.

The 22nd of July, 1824, is memorable in the annals of the theatre by reason of the first production in England of Weber's famous opera, *Der Freischütz*, in which Braham, as Rudolph, acted and sang magnificently, while Cooke was positively terrific as Zamiel. The opera was somewhat curiously described on this occasion as "an eccentric vehicle for musick, and scenick effect." Twelve months after the production of *Der Freischütz*, on the 2nd of July, 1825, the play-bills announced the first appearance of Miss Goward, "of the Theatres Royal, Norwich and York," as Little Pickle in a piece called *The Spoiled Child*. It is hardly necessary to say that Miss Goward became famous in the history of the English Stage as Mrs. Keeley. In

style, as in appearance, she formed an admirable contrast to her distinguished husband. "Mrs. Keeley had little or none of the unctuousness of her husband," wrote G. H. Lewes; "but she also was remarkably endowed. She was as intense and pointed as he was easy and fluent. She concentrated into her repartees an amount of intellectual *viz* and 'devil' which gave such a feather to the shaft that authors must often have been surprised at the revelation to themselves of the force of their own wit. Eye, voice, gesture, sparkled and chuckled. You could see that she enjoyed the joke, but enjoyed it rather as an intellectual triumph over others than (as in Keeley's case) from an impersonal delight in the joke itself. Keeley was like a fat, happy, self-satisfied puppy, taking life easily, ready to get sniffing and enjoyment out of everything. Mrs. Keeley was like a sprightly kitten, eager to make a mouse of every moving thing."

In the spring of 1828 a series of performances were given by a French company which included several distinguished actors. Later in the year an explosion of gas necessitated the closing of Covent Garden, and the company took possession of the Lyceum for a brief season. Edmund Kean was seen as Richard III., Sir Giles Overreach, Othello, Shylock, and Sir Edward Mortimer in *The Iron Chest*, while Charles Kemble amongst other parts played Bassanio, Doricourt, Cassio, and Wellborn in *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*. A once famous melodrama of the horrible kind then in such high favour, called *The Bottle Imp*, was produced in the same year, and caused a considerable sensation. On the 26th (some writers say the 10th) of February, 1830, the second Lyceum, to use the



words of Mr. Barton Baker in his interesting book, *The London Stage*, "died the natural death of all theatres—by fire. It was a terrible conflagration, sweeping away one side of Exeter Street, and involving Mr. Arnold in a heavy loss. During the next three years the company played, now at the Adelphi, now at the Olympic; and it was not until July 1834 that the present building was finished and opened under the name of the 'New Theatre Royal, Lyceum, and English Opera House.' Beazely, the architect, made a curious omission in the plan—the gallery stairs were forgotten; and this extraordinary oversight was not discovered until the building was finished, and a temporary wooden staircase, which, however, remained for several years, had to be hastily put up for the ascent of the gods to their Olympus. By this time the entire neighbourhood had been transmogrified. Old Exeter Change had disappeared, several years previously, Wellington Street had been opened, and the principal entrance to the theatre was transferred from the Strand to the new thoroughfare, an alteration that can scarcely be said to have been for the better." The opening performance of the New Lyceum took place on the 14th of July, 1834, and consisted of *The Yeoman's Daughter*, *Call Again To-morrow*, and an old Lyceum success, *Amateurs and Actors*. Mr. and Mrs. Keeley were amongst the prominent players who took part on this occasion.

The first success at the new theatre was *The Mountain Sylph*, an opera by John Barnett, which ran over fifty consecutive nights. In 1835 Frédéric Lemaître appeared as Robert Macaire, and swayed his English audiences with irresistible power. During the hot

summer of this year ices were distributed gratis to the occupants of the more expensive parts of the house ; and the manager audaciously advertised that "in consequence of its complete system of ventilation, the temperature of the theatre is many degrees cooler than that of the surrounding atmosphere." Soon after this extraordinary development of enterprise, the management, which undoubtedly deserved a better fate, became bankrupt, and Mr. Arnold was forced to retire from the direction. All sorts of experiments were made in order to render the Lyceum attractive, but none of them were crowned with success. In July 1837 Compton made his *début* in London as Robin in the ballad opera, *The Waterman*. A year later *The Devil's Opera*, by the late Sir G. A. Macfarren, was produced. Announced as a light musical satire, it proved to be very heavy indeed ; but it met with considerable approval. In 1841 Balfe took the Lyceum, in order to produce serious works by native composers. He commenced his venture with a work by himself on an Egyptian subject called *Keolanthé*. The support which he received was so small that he abandoned his enterprise after a struggle of less than three months.

Nothing prospered at the Lyceum until it was reopened under the management of Mr. and Mrs. Keeley on Easter Monday, 1844. These gifted actors, supported by an excellent company, produced a round of farce, extravaganza, and domestic dramas founded on Dickens's novels, with the most fortunate results, and, for the three years of their brilliant management, the Lyceum was amongst the most popular of Metropolitan play-houses. Amongst their conspicuous triumphs was an adaptation of *Martin Chuzzlewit* in which Mr. Keeley

was Mrs. Gamp, and his wife Young Bailey, while Sam Emery made his *début* in London as Jonas, and Alfred Wigan played Montague. In June 1847 the happy reign of the Keeleys came to an end in consequence of a financial disagreement with the proprietors of the theatre. On the 18th of October the Lyceum passed into the hands of Charles Mathews and Madame Vestris, and their management continued for nearly eight years. They themselves were, of course, the principal players, but they gathered round them an extraordinarily brilliant company, which included Leigh Murray, a comedian of exquisitely finished art, John Baldwin Buckstone, a master of sly humour and waggishness, John Pritt Harley, the incomparably buoyant, as well as Frank Matthews, Charles Selby, and others only less distinguished. Amongst the leading actresses were Mrs. Stirling, Mrs. Leigh Murray, Mrs. Fitzwilliam and Mrs. Macnamara, Miss Fairbrother, and Miss Louisa Howard.

The most remarkable of the Mathews-Vestris productions were Planché's series of "fairy extravaganzas," which were staged as admirably as they were acted. In *The Island of Jewels*, William Beverley, the great scene-painter, introduced the first transformation-scene. The Lyceum became fashionable and was well attended, but in spite of this the Mathews management ended in bankruptcy, the house being closed suddenly in March 1855.

After a brief tenure by "Professor" Anderson, the once-famous "Wizard of the North," and a season of Italian opera, the theatre was let in 1856 to Charles Dillon, who opened in his great part of Belphegor. On this occasion Miss Marie Wilton (Lady Bancroft) made

her first appearances in London as Henri in *Belphegor* and Perdita in William Brough's burlesque of that name. Dillon's vigorous and robust style of acting was received with great applause; but nevertheless, at the end of two seasons he was in such financial straits that he had to withdraw from his enterprise. Italian Opera was the next variety of entertainment at this theatre of many vicissitudes. In 1858 Edmund Falconer became lessee, and produced his comedy, *The Extremes*, which had a long run. Falconer was succeeded by Madame Celeste, who made a heavy loss in two disastrous seasons. In 1861 the destinies of the theatre were once more controlled by Falconer, who produced his Irish melodrama, *Peep o' Day*, which had an enormous vogue, owing mainly to a sensation scene which was then considered a marvel of stage mechanism.

We now pass to an era in the history of the Lyceum second in importance only to that of Henry Irving himself. January the 10th, 1863, saw the theatre opened under the management of Charles Fechter, the distinguished French artist who played in English. Fine actor though he was, Fechter is now remembered quite as much by his theatrical reforms as by his own impersonations. "With the Fechter *régime*," says Mr. Barton Baker, "began a new era of the London Stage, the era in which we are now living; it was under him the great theatrical revival of our time was initiated, and that the drama once more became both fashionable and popular; he brought in a new order of things, sweeping away worn-out traditions, and was the pioneer of all those elaborate spectacles of which we are getting a little too much at the present day. He began by revolutionizing the stage itself, and thereby rendered

possible such mechanical effects as we never dreamed of. The ancient grooves, trap-doors, and sticky flats were done away with, the flooring was so constructed that it could be taken up like a child's puzzle, and scenery could be raised or sunk in any part, while all shifting was done on the mezzaine beneath ; ceilings were no longer represented by hanging cloths, or the walls of a room by open wings, but were solidly built ; the old glaring 'floats,' which used to make such hideous lights and shadows upon the faces of the performers, were sunk and subdued, and set scene succeeded set scene with a rapidity which, in those days, when never more than one set was attempted in each act, was regarded as marvellous."

If this is a somewhat exaggerated statement of Fechter's achievement, there is much in it which it is impossible to dispute, and, as Mr. Joseph Knight has reminded us, "the influence of Fechter is valuable rather for what it has removed than for what it has supplied." Though one can hardly concede that Fechter "shook to their foundations all the traditions of the old school of acting, which, however excellent they might have been in their time, had become musty and pedantic," he certainly introduced such innovations as amounted to what Dr. Westland Marston described as "a familiar and realistic style in tragic acting."

Fechter's campaign at the Lyceum opened with the production of *The Duke's Motto*, an adaptation by John Brougham of *Le Bossu*. In this piece he was seen to great advantage, as was Miss Kate Terry, who was associated with Fechter in a number of his Lyceum triumphs. *Hamlet* was revived in May 1864, and the French actor repeated a most important and

interesting impersonation. "Fechter's Hamlet," says G. H. Lewes, "was one of the very best, and his Othello one of the very worst, I have ever seen. On leaving the theatre after *Hamlet*, I felt once more what a great play it was, with all its faults; and they are gross and numerous. On leaving the theatre after *Othello*, I felt as if my old admiration for this supreme masterpiece of the art had been an exaggeration." In January 1865 Fechter appeared as Robert Macaire, and three months later as Ruy Blas in *Don Césaire de Bazan*. In the autumn Mr. Palgrave Simpson's *Master of Ravenswood* was produced, with Fechter in the chief part; and this version of Scott's novel had a long run. On Whit Monday, 1866, he revived *The Corsican Brothers*, with his wonted success. In September 1867 *The Lady of Lyons* was revived, Fechter playing the part of Claude Melnotte, and Miss Carlotta Leclercq that of Pauline. This was the closing production of Fechter's management, which concluded in November. The next lessee of the Lyceum was Mr. E. T. Smith, who was at the head of affairs until 1869. In the following year the Mansfield brothers took over the theatre, and produced the comic opera, *Chilperic*, which was a complete failure. For a good many years no money had been made at the Lyceum, which had, in consequence, come to be looked upon as the most unlucky house in London. In spite of this disheartening state of things, Mr. H. L. Bateman determined to take the historic play-house, and entered upon management in the autumn of 1871.

Before we conclude this brief sketch of the Lyceum, something must be said of the Beef Steak Society which for a long time held its convivial meetings within the walls of the theatre. The society was founded by John



Rich, the patentee of Covent Garden, and George Lambert, the scene-painter, in 1735. Informal meetings at first took place in Rich's room at the theatre, when his guests partook of hot beef-steak specially prepared by their host, and "a bottle of port from the tavern hard by":

First Rich, who this feast of the gridiron planned,  
And formed with a touch of his harlequin's wand,  
Out of mighty rude matter, this brotherly band,  
The jolly old Steakers of England.

The number of members was limited to twenty-four. As the original members died off, their places were taken by the most fashionable and distinguished men of the time, including Theophilus Cibber, the Duke of Norfolk, George Colman, the Prince of Wales (afterwards George IV.), John Wilkes, and the Duke of York. At various dates John Kemble, Lord Brougham, William Linley (Sheridan's brother-in-law), the Duke of Sussex, Sir Francis Burdett, the Duke of Leinster, and the Earl of Dalhousie, were "old Steakers." The society dined in a room at Covent Garden Theatre, wainscoted and roofed with English oak, and appropriately ornamented with gridirons. The feasts took place every Saturday from November to June:

On Saturn's day this altar burns  
With festive preparation,  
When twice twelve Brothers rule by turns  
To pour a fit libation.

The diners could see the steaks cooking through an enormous grating shaped like a gridiron at one end of the room. In 1808, on the destruction of Covent Garden Theatre, the "Sublime Society" moved to the



Bedford Coffee House. In the following year it took possession of rooms at the Lyceum, and remained in them until the fire of 1830. Special arrangements were made for the accommodation of the members on the re-building of the theatre, and the club remained at the new Lyceum from 1838 until its dissolution in 1867. Although "the Sublime Society of Beef Steaks" has ceased to be, the beautiful and interesting room in which their festivities took place is still devoted to hospitable purposes. Since Henry Irving has controlled the destinies of the Lyceum, a great number of the most distinguished men of the day have been entertained in the Beefsteak Room, the ornaments of which include Whistler's magnificent portrait of the actor in the character of Philip of Spain.

## CHAPTER X

### MATHIAS AND JEREMY DIDDLE

1871—1872

**H**EZEKIAH LUTHERICUM BATEMAN—to give the new manager of the Lyceum his full name—was born at Baltimore in 1812, and educated for a mechanical engineer. In 1832 he gave up his profession and became an actor, supporting, amongst other stars, the elder Booth and Miss Ellen Tree, afterwards Mrs. Charles Kean. Seven years later he married Miss Sidney Frances Cowell, daughter of a well-known low comedian, who was herself an actress and playwright. Eight children were born of the marriage, the two eldest of whom, Kate and Ellen, went on the stage when very young, and, as the “Bateman Children,” caused a sensation, not only in the States, but all over Great Britain. In 1855 their father went into management in America, and in 1862 Miss Kate Bateman appeared at Boston as Leah, and produced a profound impression, which was deepened when she played the part at the Adelphi a year later.

Settling in England in 1870, Mr. Bateman took the Lyceum in the following year, with a view to introducing his daughter Isabel to the English public; and amongst those engaged for her support was Henry

Irving. It has been claimed for Mr. Bateman that in securing the services of Irving he exhibited very considerable acumen. Nothing could be farther from the truth: he probably had not the faintest suspicion that the creator of Digby Grant was destined to become a great tragic actor.

The first production of the new *régime* took place on the 11th of September, 1871, and proved to be a drama by Mrs. Bateman, entitled *Fanchette; or, the Will-of-the-Wisp*, which was based on a German dramatic version by Madame Birch-Pfeiffer of George Sand's charming and tender idyll, *La Petite Fadette*. The new piece was a complete failure, everything being sacrificed to the principal part, which Miss Bateman was far too inexperienced to play. The following remarks from *The Athenæum* are interesting on account of their allusion to Miss Terry:

"Whatever merit the story [of *Fanchette*] can have in a dramatic shape must depend upon the performance of the heroine. Rightly to present this requires in the actress genius of the highest order or a very peculiar idiosyncrasy. A woman who, knowing nothing of the character, could study it objectively, fathom and master it, might anticipate the highest honours of the stage. We have seen but one actress who has shown a natural aptitude for a part of this kind—Miss Ellen Terry, whose premature retreat from the boards was matter for regret."

The writer of these lines could not foresee how splendid a place Miss Terry was destined to fill at the Lyceum; but the fact of his mentioning her on this occasion is curious. As Landry Barbeau in *Fanchette*, Irving had to impersonate a love-sick peasant

of the most sentimental kind. The part, unimportant in itself, was entirely outside his range, and he was able to do little with it.

The next production took place on the 23rd of October, 1871, and was a version of Dickens's novel by James Albery, entitled *Pickwick*. This did little to increase the reputation of the author of *Two Roses*, and even less to put money into the manager's pockets. The central figure of the adaptation was Alfred Jingle, in which it was felt that Irving, looking to his previous success in not altogether dissimilar parts, would make a great hit. It turned out that his performance was the most creditable feature of an ill-fated production. As Jingle, Irving wore his audacity and villainy with admirable ease, but his speech was slightly lacking in glib volubility. Mr. Addison played Pickwick, and Mr. Odell, of Savage Club fame, Job Trotter; while George Belmore was amusing as Sam Weller. *Pickwick* was revived with considerable alterations under the title of *Jingle*, on the 23rd of April, 1887, when Irving was seen in his old part, his chief companions being Mr. Howe, Mr. Norman Forbes, Mr. Haviland, and Mr. Stephen Caffrey.

The failure of his second experiment disheartened Mr. Bateman. He had lost much money, and had almost decided to give up the Lyccum and return to America. Irving had lately become acquainted with Leopold Lewis, who had prepared for the English Stage a version of *Le Juif Polonais*. This dramatic study by MM. Erckmann-Chatrian first appeared in *Les Romans Populaires*, and was subsequently produced as a play at the Théâtre Cluny, in Paris, in 1869. The piece had already been adapted by Mr. F. C. Burnand, under

the title of *Paul Zegers*, and performed at the Alfred Theatre with indifferent success. Mr. Leopold Lewis's version was called *The Bells*. Irving had to use all his powers of persuasion to induce Mr. Bateman to put the play into rehearsal, for, in his opinion, there was a prejudice against a romantic drama of that particular type. At last, however, the actor was allowed to have his own way, and *The Bells* was played for the first time on the 25th of November, 1871. The audience was a very scanty one, but it made up in enthusiasm what it lacked in numbers. *The Bells* proved a triumph, instantaneous and unequivocal, for the interpreter of Mathias. By the side of this terrible figure, the other persons of the drama were so unimportant as to pass almost unnoticed. Irving's Mathias was, and still is, a colossal demonstration of the horribly fascinating. The man, as Oxenford wrote in *The Times*, "is at once in two worlds, between which there is no link—an outer world that is ever smiling, an inner world which is purgatory." Of the dream scene it is sufficient to say that Irving's astounding power made one almost forgive its outrageous length. It was rendered impressive, not by trick and artifice, but by sheer acting power.

When the curtain fell after the first performance of *The Bells*, the critics rushed away to write their notices, and next day Henry Irving found himself a celebrity. Amongst those sitting in judgment was Mr. Clement Scott, who thus describes his experiences:

"I shall never forget the wonderful effect of the play and the actor. Of the success of the experiment there was no doubt. The play was new and alluring; the actor had triumphed, and was suddenly lifted at one



"KNOW HOW TO PLAY 'THE BELLS'— WELL, I OUGHT TO, AFTER  
TWENTY-FIVE YEARS' PRACTICE!"

CARTOON BY ALFRED BRYAN. FROM "THE ENTR'ACTE," DECEMBER 5TH, 1896.

bound above his contemporaries. I thought so that night, and what I thought was printed next morning.

My account of *The Bells* was received with blank astonishment and incredulity, and I received a sharp reprimand from my editor, the best friend I ever had in the world, for my prophetic utterances concerning an actor who was comparatively unknown. 'Clemmy, my boy!' said my kind old friend to me—he was more a father than a friend, 'Clemmy, my boy! you are engaged on this newspaper as a dramatic reviewer, and not as a sporting prophet. Your "tips" may be admirable, but, believe me, dramatic "tips" are dangerous. They hang heavily on your hands, and you cannot shake them off.'

*Pickwick* was played each night after *The Bells*. This very inopportune combination drew from "Mr. Punch" the characteristic remark that he preferred "to see Mr. Irving play the *Bells* without the *Jingle*." The run of Leopold Lewis's play terminated on the 17th of May, 1872, after having been performed a hundred and fifty-one consecutive times. The original cast was the following:

#### THE BELLS.

<i>Mathias</i> . . . . .	MR. HENRY IRVING.
<i>Waller</i> . . . . .	MR. FRANK HALL.
<i>Hans</i> . . . . .	MR. F. W. IRISH.
<i>Christian</i> . . . . .	MR. H. CRELLIN.
<i>Mesmerist</i> . . . . .	MR. A. TAPPING.
<i>Doctor Zimmer</i> . . . . .	MR. DYAS.
<i>Notary</i> . . . . .	MR. COLLETT.
<i>Tony</i> . . . . .	MR. FREDERICKS.
<i>Fritz</i> . . . . .	MR. FOTHERINGHAM.
<i>Judge of the Court</i> . . . . .	MR. GASTON MURRAY.
<i>Clerk of the Court</i> . . . . .	MR. BRANSCOMBE.
<i>Catherine</i> . . . . .	MISS G. PAUNCEFORT.
<i>Annette</i> . . . . .	MISS FANNY HEYWOOD.
<i>Sczel</i> . . . . .	MISS HELEN MAYNE.



*The Bells* has been so frequently and so recently revived that even the youngest play-goer has had the opportunity of seeing it. As a souvenir of the twentieth anniversary of the first production, the members of the Lyceum company presented their chief with a bronze statuette of himself in the part of Mathias by Mr. Onslow Ford, R.A.

In 1887 that superb French actor, Coquelin *aîné*, produced *Le Juif Polonais* in London, and played Mathias in order to measure himself with the English player. Following the example of Talien, who originally played the part at the Théâtre Cluny, he showed us a Mathias absolutely unlike that to which we had been accustomed.

"Irving's hero," wrote one of the critics, "was a grave, dignified being; Coquelin's was a stout Alsatian, well-to-do, respected by his neighbours, but still on an equality with the humble folk around him. Irving's was a conscience-stricken personage; Coquelin's had no conscience at all. Irving's was all remorse; Coquelin was not in the least disturbed. He takes delight in his ill-got treasures. The only side on which he is assailable is that of his fears, and the arrival of the second Jew, so like the first, terrifies him; and too much wine on the night of the wedding brings on the disturbed dream."

M. Got, sometime *doyen* of the Comédie-Française, has also played the part on the same lines as Coquelin.

It will not be denied by the most ardent of Irving's admirers that M. Coquelin's Mathias was more probably the being of Erckmann-Chatrian's imagination than that of the English actor. Still, it would be difficult to maintain that it was, from the theatrical

point of view, equally effective. On the whole it seems to me that the honours were easy.

On the 1st of April, 1872, Mr. Bateman revived James Kenney's farce, *Raising the Wind*, in order that Irving might be seen as Jeremy Diddler, the part which "Gentleman" Lewis played so brilliantly when the piece was first produced at Covent Garden in 1803. *Raising the Wind* was played after *The Bells*. "Mr. Irving's triumph," wrote the critic of *The Athenæum*, "is great. At one moment, as Mathias in *The Bells*, he keeps his audience spellbound by the terrible picture he presents to them of a conscience-stricken murderer, and the next excites uproarious laughter, by his ingenious devices as the gay and gifted Jeremy." One is tempted to describe this as a feat without parallel in the annals of any other living actor until one recalls the fact that Mr. Beerbohm Tree has frequently played Falstaff and Gringoire in *The Ballad Monger* at the same performance. The following are the casts of *Raising the Wind* at the two chief revivals of the play at the Lyceum :

### RAISING THE WIND.

	1872.	July 24, 1886.
<i>Jeremy Diddler</i> . . .	MR. HENRY IRVING .	MR. HENRY IRVING.
<i>Fainwood</i> . . .	MR. ODELL . . .	MR. NORMAN FORBES.
<i>Plainway</i> . . .	MR. GASTON MURRAY .	MR. HOWE.
<i>Sam</i> . . .	MR. F. W. IRISH . .	MR. JOHNSON.
<i>Miss Durable</i> . . .	MRS. F. B. EGAN . .	MRS. CHIPPENDALE.
<i>Peggy</i> . . .	MISS LAFONTAINE . .	MISS ELLEN TERRY.

*The Bells* and *Raising the Wind* ran up to the 17th of May, 1872, when Henry Irving's first season with Mr. Bateman at the Lyceum terminated.

## CHAPTER XI

CHARLES I. AND EUGENE ARAM

SEPTEMBER 1872 — SEPTEMBER 1873

THE triumph of Mathias left Irving in no wise inclined to rest satisfied with what he had achieved: indeed, it increased in him the appetite for experiment. His success had endeared him to Mr. Bateman, who believed to his dying day that he was the sole discoverer of the new tragedian. About this time a proposal was made to the manager of the Lyceum by Mr. W. G. Wills, who had already given proof of dramatic and poetic power in a blank-verse play called *Medea*, that he should produce a drama dealing with Charles I. Mr. Bateman, although in many ways an enterprising and competent theatrical director, was by no means disposed to embark on a policy which he deemed adventurous, if not hazardous. When, however, Irving joined his prayers to those of the dramatist, the lessee of the Lyceum yielded with a good grace, and agreed to commence his second season with the production of *Charles I.*

The merits of Mr. Wills's work have been so frequently, and in some cases so passionately, discussed, that little remains to be said on the subject. Those who are least satisfied with *Charles I.* will admit that, whatever its blemishes, it is entitled to respect. Its

greatest blot is undoubtedly the caricature of Cromwell, whom Mr. Wills makes—

A mouthing patriot, with an itching palm,  
In one hand menace, in the other greed.

The drama is a libel on a great hero, and, what is worse, it is a libel at once foolish and feeble, which cannot reasonably be set down to the “exigencies of the theatre.” Mr. Wills’s perversity in this matter is to some extent explained, though by no means excused, when we remember that he was an Irishman, and as such held Cromwell in unmeasured scorn and detestation. But if the dramatist made the Protector a very prince of darkness, though by no means a gentleman, he was not so foolish as to glorify King Charles beyond recognition. He shows us a noble and lovable man, whose heroic qualities are balanced by weakness, prejudice, and an unlimited capacity to deceive. The writing of the play rises at times to genuine poetry, and yet, as a whole, it is not a poem; it contains excellently devised situations; but still, it is not a well-made play. But the principal part affords an actor of genius a magnificent opportunity, and for this reason it is likely to live on the Stage as long as any poetic play of the present century.

When it was noised abroad that Henry Irving was to be seen as Charles I., the news was received with something like contemptuous amusement. Grotesque comedy was within his range, for he had proved it to be so in *Digby Grant*; his success in full-blooded melodrama could not be disputed: but that he should succeed in a part which required above all dignity and pathos seemed altogether improbable. Such was the

feeling when the doors of the Lyceum opened on the 28th of September, 1872. A few hours later, when the curtain fell on the last act of the new play, it was agreed that the erstwhile grotesque comedian had proved himself a paragon of kingly dignity, a master of unforced pathos. It was a more substantial, if less showy, victory than that which he won in *The Bells*. I do not think that, with the possible exception of Becket, Irving to this day has done anything more perfect than Charles I. He was not content with showing us the outward graces of this royal and ill-fated gentleman; he got "into the skin" of the king, and revealed the working of his mind. For a man who was an acknowledged expert in the art of "making-up," it was not a difficult thing to reproduce one of the many portraits of Charles I. which we owe to the brush of Vandyke. It was a far more difficult matter to live up to the costume during four long acts, and to do nothing under any stress of emotion which should be inconsistent with the dignity of a king. Irving might easily have been so gravely formal as to produce an impression of austerity. So far from this being the case, he was human to the core, and never appealed in vain to our sympathy. He was, in fact, most effective in those scenes in which the simplest affections predominated: it was as a loving father reciting an old ballad to his children, as a husband saying good-bye to the wife he adored, that he impressed his audience most deeply. *Charles I.* is a sombre, and, on the whole, an unexciting play, for Mr. Wills did not condescend to comic relief on the one hand, nor violent incident on the other. He relied on the pathetic circumstances of the central figure to arouse and retain the interest of

the audience; and by his interpretation of that figure Irving completely justified the author's trust.

But if the actor was seen to the greatest advantage in the quietest parts of the play, it must not be imagined that he failed to give full weight to those in which energy and action are called for. The scene in the King's Cabinet at Whitehall was played with admirable vigour and matchless dignity. His scornful and indignant delivery of his replies to the proposals of Cromwell, his magnificent rebuke of the rudeness of Ireton, electrified his hearers. Again, at the end of the third act he addressed the following speech to the traitorous Lord Moray with withering disdain:

"I saw a picture once by a great master,  
'Twas an old man's head.  
Narrow and evil was its wrinkled front—  
Eyes close and cunning; a dull vulpine smile.  
'Twas called a Judas! Wide that painter erred.  
Judas had eyes like thine of candid blue;  
His skin was smooth, his hair of youthful gold;  
Upon his brow shone the white stamp of truth;  
And lips like thine did give the traitor kiss!  
The king, my father, loved thine—and at his death  
He gave me solemn charge to cherish thee.  
And I have kept it to my injury.  
It is a score of years since then, my lord;  
Hast waited all this time to pay me thus?"

The last act is so finely imagined that it almost plays itself; the scene is inevitably touching, but Irving, in faultless fashion, places a "sorrow's crown of sorrow" on it.

A practical proof of the success of Mr. Wills's play, and the popularity of Irving's impersonation, is afforded by the fact that it ran for a hundred and eighty nights to crowded houses.

The following was the original cast :

# CHARLES THE FIRST.

BY W. G. WILLS.

<i>Charles I.</i>	. . . . .	Mr. HENRY IRVING.
<i>Oliver Cromwell</i>	. . . . .	Mr. GEORGE BELMORE.
<i>Marquis of Huntley</i>	. . . . .	Mr. ADDISON.
<i>Lord Moray</i>	. . . . .	Mr. EDGAR.
<i>Ireton</i>	. . . . .	Mr. MARKLY.
<i>Pages</i>	. . . . .	{ MISSES E. MAYNE AND J. HENRI.
<i>Princess Elizabeth</i>	{ <i>Children of the King</i>	MISS HARWOOD.
<i>Prince James</i>		MISS ALLCROFT.
<i>Prince Henry</i>		MISS WELCH.
<i>Lady Eleanor Davys</i>	. . . . .	MISS G. PAUNCEFORT.
<i>Queen Henrietta Maria</i>	. . . . .	MISS ISABEL BATEMAN.

Cavaliers, Pages, Officers, and Soldiers of Parliament,  
Attendants, etc., etc.

ACT I.—*Gardens near Hampton Court.*

ACT II.—*King's Cabinet at Whitehall.*

ACT III.—*Scottish Camp at Newark.*

ACT IV.—*Whitehall at Daybreak.*

Frequent revivals of Mr. Wills's drama show that it has not lost its hold on the public. On the 4th of March, 1891, the chief parts in *Charles I.* were taken by Mr. Howe, Mr. Terriss, Mr. Wenman, and Mr. Tyars, Irving of course playing the King. The Queen Henrietta Maria of Miss Ellen Terry was a beautiful feature of this revival, while her niece, Miss Minnie Terry, made a delightful Princess Elizabeth.

The success of Mr. Wills induced the manager of the Lyceum to afford him another opportunity. He accordingly wrote *The Fate of Eugene Aram*, which was produced on the 19th of April, 1873, with the following cast :



## EUGENE ARAM.

<i>Eugene Aram</i>	. . . . .	MR. HENRY IRVING.
<i>Parson Meadows (Vicar of Knaresborough)</i>	.	MR. W. H. STEPHENS.
<i>Richard Houseman</i>	. . . . .	MR. E. F. EDGAR.
<i>Jowell (a gardener)</i>	. . . . .	MR. F. W. IRISH.
<i>Joly (his son)</i>	. . . . .	MISS WILLA BROWN.
<i>Ruth Meadows</i>	. . . . .	MISS ISABEL BATEMAN.

ACT I.—*The Vicar's Garden.*

ACT II.—*The Home Rooms of the Parsonage.*

ACT III.—*The Churchyard in the Grey Light of Dawn.*

The story of Eugene Aram had already been dealt with in notable manner by two writers of widely different temperament. Thomas Hood had composed the poem by the recitation of which Henry Irving produced so profound a sensation, and Lord Lytton had made Aram the chief figure in a novel of great popularity, which was at once dramatised, and produced, with but little success. Two acts of a stage version of Eugene Aram by Lord Lytton himself are in existence, so it is evident that that very dexterous play-maker was alive to the dramatic possibilities of his romance. Mr. Wills characteristically followed neither Hood nor Lytton, nor the true story of the Yorkshire murderer, but, according to the play-bill, "based his drama on tradition," whatever that phrase may mean. The real Eugene Aram was tried for an extremely cruel and greedy murder, and, after being found guilty, was of course hanged: the Aram of Mr. Wills's imagination kills the seducer of the woman he loved, and dies of remorse after confessing his crime to a new mistress of his affections, who is his betrothed wife. For my part I cannot say that I attach much blame to Mr. Wills for boldly turning the Aram story to his own uses; his

sin in this case was at all events a much slighter one than his gratuitous falsification of history in *Charles I.*

One circuit of the clock suffices for the entire action of *The Fate of Eugene Aram*; there are only six persons in the play, the interest of which is concentrated on Aram himself. The first act is played in the garden—gay and fragrant with all manner of flowers—of the Knaresborough vicarage, fourteen years after Aram's crime, on the eve of his marriage with Ruth Meadows. The world goes very well with him: he persuades himself that he has atoned for his sin by good works, and feels safe in the security of silence and in the strength of his adamantine will. In the second act we pass from the idyllic to the dramatic. Aram's old accomplice, Houseman, has made his appearance, and attempts to frighten him into paying blackmail. Threats and persuasions are alike in vain. The tables seem to be turned, until, suddenly, the discovery by the villagers of the bones of Daniel Clarke, the murdered man, in St. Robert's Cave, is announced. The vicar orders Aram and Houseman to go with him to inspect them. Aram collapses; the white-heat of his passion gives place to utter despair. He flies from the skeleton and makes his way to the churchyard. Broken with grief and remorse, enfeebled in body, the hand of death is upon him. He falls at the foot of the cross, where Ruth finds him, and hears from his lips the confession of the crime. As the light of morning creeps into the sky, Eugene Aram passes away.

That Irving would play Eugene Aram powerfully and impressively was a foregone conclusion, in view of his performance of Mathias and his recitation of Hood's poem. The public received his impersonation

with great enthusiasm, while the critics were almost unanimous in praising it. The staid and sober *Spectator* joined in the chorus of approval by declaring that—

“The acting of Mr. Irving in this character is wonderfully fine, so deeply impressive that once only, by a bit of ‘business’ with lights and a looking-glass, quite unworthy of the play and of him, does he remind one that he is acting and not living through that mortal struggle; so various that to lose sight of his face for a moment is to lose some expression full of power and of fidelity to the pervading motive of the part.”

*The Saturday Review* denounced Mr. Wills’s play as “an idyllic view of murder,” and remarked that he had added boundlessly to Irving’s range by opening up to him the entire Newgate Calendar. Among the malcontents was Mr. Joseph Knight, who wrote in that judicial manner which is justified by his immense knowledge of the art of acting. In his view, Irving in the first act was quiet and effective; in the second he was marvellously powerful; but his performance in the third was wildly extravagant and exaggerated. How different was the impression produced by this last act on Mr. Clement Scott we may judge by the following extract from his criticism:

“The third act will provoke much controversy. It is, in reality, one tremendous soliloquy, and the excellence of Mr. Irving’s acting is at once pronounced with the statement that it held the audience almost from the commencement. . . . The play may be horrible, but such acting will not be dismissed by future audiences, in spite of the elaboration of the end of so terrible a life. That the actor could get variety out

of such an unrelieved scene is marvellous. It is all on his shoulders, but again and again the interest revives. The confession was listened to with the deepest attention, and the on-coming death, now at the tomb, now writhing against the tree, and now prostrate upon the turf, brings into play an amount of study which is little less than astonishing, and an amount of power for which credit would have been given to Mr. Irving by few who have seen his finest performances."

There is no doubt that an overwhelming majority of play-goers shared Mr. Scott's view of the performance of the last act of *Eugene Aram*. The play has been revived several times. On the 6th of June, 1879, Miss Ellen Terry was seen as Ruth Meadows for the first time. Her impersonation was distinguished by exquisite sympathy, and added greatly to the interest of the very sombre drama. It may be added that Mr. H. B. Irving has recently dealt with the true story of Eugene Aram in one of the leading periodicals in most interesting fashion.

## CHAPTER XII

### RICHELIEU AND PHILIP

SEPTEMBER 1873—OCTOBER 1874

AMONGST those who were warmest in their praise of Irving's Mathias was Lord Lytton, who wrote that his impersonation was "too admirable not to be appreciated by every competent judge of art. It will be a sure good fortune," he added, "to any dramatic author to obtain his representation in some leading part worthy of his study, and suited to his powers." The good fortune was, as it turned out, in store for Lord Lytton himself, for it was decided to revive *Richelieu ; or, The Conspiracy*, at the Lyceum on the 27th of September, 1873. The experiment was one of exceptional interest, for Irving was the original exponent of all the characters in which hitherto he had distinguished himself, and there was therefore no comparison with which to compare him. Richelieu, on the other hand, was a part in which the greatest of his immediate predecessors had gained a signal triumph. Previous to its production at Covent Garden on the 7th of March, 1839, Lytton's play was submitted for consideration and criticism to a number of distinguished men of letters, amongst whom was Robert Browning. It was at first intended that Macready should play the part of De Mauprat ; but this idea was soon

abandoned, as it was impossible to find another actor to whom the part of the cardinal could be safely intrusted. Macready's impersonation was received with wild enthusiasm, and, although the play was damned with faint praise by the press, it proved very much to the taste of the public. "We said that the herd would go and gape at *Richelieu*," wrote the critic of the *John Bull*, "and were oracular, for they do."

As we have already seen, Irving made his first appearance on the Stage as the Duke of Orleans in this play, and before he came to London he acted several other minor characters in it. Excitement and expectation ran almost as high before the first night of the Lyceum revival of *Richelieu* as before the production of *Charles I.* The reserved portions of the house were crowded with leaders of fashion, men of letters, and artists, while a vast crowd poured into the pit and gallery, as soon as the doors were open. There have been many scenes of tumultuous acclaim at the Lyceum Theatre, but it may be questioned whether the frenzy with which Irving's performance of *Richelieu* was received has ever been exceeded. One of the critics compares the roar of greeting which welcomed the actor to the explosion of a mine; another states that Irving was literally justified in saying, with Edmund Kean, "The pit rose at me"; a third declares that "hats and handkerchiefs were waved, the pit and gallery leaped upon the benches, the house shook and rang with applause"; and a fourth gives it as his opinion that such enthusiasm had not been witnessed in an English theatre for half a century. If we turn to the press notices, we do not find that the verdict of the first-night audience was fully endorsed by the

critics. In *The Times*, Oxenford, it is true, unhesitatingly declared that "here was tragic acting in the grandest style," and added that although *Richelieu* is not a tragedy, it belonged to the tragical category, as none could do justice to it but a tragedian. In accounting for the demonstration of approval and sympathy called forth by Irving's performance in the fourth act, Oxenford boldly states that they were unquestionably the result of "genius and self-abandonment on the part of the artist." In *The Daily Telegraph* the performance of the play and those who applauded it was, on the other hand, denounced in good set terms. "No one doubted," said the writer, "that the performance of Mr. Irving was intelligent and extremely picturesque. That came without saying. But many in the audience expected a great performance, and it did not appear as if the power was forthcoming. As a picture the *Richelieu* was everything that could be desired, but the acting was only of average merit. The excitement of the evening was reserved for the end of the fourth act, when *Richelieu* launches the curse of Rome on Baradas. We know the lines :

Ay, it is so ?

Then wakes the power which in the age of iron  
Burst forth to curb the great and raise the low,  
Mark where she stands ! Around her form I draw  
The awful circle of our solemn church,  
Set but a foot within that holy ground,  
And on thy head—yea, though it wore a crown—  
I launch the curse of Rome.

"Seldom has such excitement been seen at a theatre, and seldom have we so entirely disagreed with the verdict. We said at the outset, we agree to differ. At this speech, and at the final words—



Irreverent ribald!

If so, beware the falling ruins. Hark!

I tell thee, scorner of these whitening hairs,

When the snow melteth there shall come a flood,

Avaunt! My name is Richelieu—I defy thee:

Walk blindfold on—behind thee stalks the headsman.

Ha! ha; how pale he is! Heaven save my country!—

the pit rose, and literally yelled for Mr. Irving. But what has been done? Voice, strength, and energy overtaxed; a speech delivered so incoherently that few could follow one syllable; one of those whirlwinds of noise which creates applause, mainly owing to an irresistible, but still unhealthy, excitement. We doubt not, many consider this very great acting. It looks so; it sounds so."

And the criticism concludes:

"It was an experiment, this Richelieu, and a daring one. The audience deliberately voted for the management. With great regret, we cannot endorse the popular verdict."

The notices of *The Times* and *The Telegraph* form a remarkable little study in contrast. The applause which is described by the critic of the former as a legitimate tribute to "genius and self-abandonment," is pronounced by the critic of the latter to be the unreasoning homage of a leather-lunged mob to mere noise and fury, signifying nothing.

With these expressions of opinion as to the merits of Irving's Richelieu it is interesting to consider that of M. Jules Claretie, who, since 1885, has been administrator of the Comédie-Française. Writing in *La Presse* in June 1879, M. Claretie says:

"*Richelieu* was the first play in which I saw Mr. Irving in London. Here he is superb. His performance

amounts to a resurrection. The great Cardinal, lean, worn, eaten up by ambition, less for himself than for France, is admirably rendered. His gait is jerky, like that of a man shaken by fever; his eye has the depth of a visionary; a hoarse cough preys upon that frail body, which is yet made of steel. When Richelieu appears in the midst of the courtiers, when he flings scorn in the face of the mediocrity who is to succeed him, when he supplicates and adjures the weak Louis XIII., Irving gives that grand figure a striking majesty. And what an artist the tragedian is! I went to see him in his dressing-room after the performance. I found him surrounded by portraits of Richelieu. He had before him the three studies of Philippe de Champaigne, which are preserved in the National Gallery: Richelieu seen full-face, right-hand profile and left-hand profile, and also a photograph of the full-length portrait of the Cardinal of the same Philippe de Champaigne."

The following are the casts of *Richelieu* on its original production at Covent Garden, and on its first revival at the Lyceum on the 27th of September, 1873:

## RICHELIEU.

Covent Garden, 1839.

Lyceum, 1873.

<i>Cardinal Richelieu</i>	. . .	MACREADY	. . .	MR. HENRY IRVING.
<i>Louis XIII.</i>	. . .	ELTON	. . .	MR. JOHN CLAYTON.
<i>Gaston (Duke of Orleans)</i>	. . .	DIDDEAR	. . .	MR. BEAUMONT.
<i>Baradas</i>	. . .	WARDE	. . .	MR. H. FORRESTER.
<i>De Mauprat</i>	. . .	ANDERSON	. . .	MR. J. B. HOWARD.
<i>De Beringhen</i>	. . .	NINING	. . .	MR. F. CHARLES.
<i>Joseph</i>	. . .	PHELPS	. . .	MR. JOHN CARTER.
<i>Huguet</i>	. . .	G. BENNETT	. . .	MR. E. F. EDGAR.
<i>François</i>	. . .	HOWE	. . .	MR. H. B. CONWAY.
<i>De Claremont</i>	. . .	"	. . .	MR. A. TAPPING.

<i>Captain of the Guard</i>	.	.	.	.	.	MR. HARWOOD.
<i>First Secretary</i>	.	.	.	.	.	MR. W. L. BRANSCOMBE.
<i>Second Secretary</i>	.	.	.	.	.	MR. HENRY.
<i>Third Secretary</i>	.	.	.	.	.	MR. COLLETT.
<i>Marion de Lorme</i>	.	MISS FAUCIT	.	MISS LE THIÈRE.		
<i>Julie de Mortemar</i>	.	MISS CHARLES	.	MISS ISABEL BATEMAN.		

Courtiers, Officers, Pages, Guards, Conspirators, etc., etc.

For no less than a hundred and twenty nights the cheers which greeted Irving's first performance of the Cardinal were repeated with equal sincerity, if with less boisterousness and vehemence, and on every succeeding revival it has been welcomed with enthusiasm. As the run of the play proceeded, applause was undoubtedly better deserved by the chief exponent than was originally the case. Labouring under the intense excitement inseparable from the presentation of a new and terribly exacting part, Irving was not seen at his best in the early days of *Richelieu*. He was inclined to be noisy where he should have been passionate; and in a play which at almost every point holds out temptations to extravagance, he more than once fell into exaggerations which verged on the grotesque. To this day his *Richelieu* is marred in places by over-emphasis; but, by reason of its splendid picturesqueness, its wonderful subtlety of detail, it deservedly takes high rank amongst his impersonations. If Irving has not succeeded in effacing the memory of Macready's great performance, he has amongst living actors no rival in the rôle. This could not be said so long as Edwin Booth was alive, for his *Richelieu* was among the triumphs of an illustrious career.

On the 7th of February, 1874, the management of the Lyceum produced a romantic drama from the pen of Mr. Hamilton Aïdé, entitled *Philip*. The new piece

was founded on Balzac's story *La Grande Bretèche*, one of the *Scènes de la Vie Privée*, which had already furnished Scribe with a plot. The character of Philip de Miraflore was not rich in opportunities for such an actor as Henry Irving, but it enabled him to deal with a new leading motive – jealousy; and this he did most effectively. The interest of the public in Mr. Adé's play was materially lessened when it was announced that Irving would appear as Hamlet before the close of the year.

## CHAPTER XIII

### HAMLET

OCTOBER 31ST, 1874

A GLANCE at the stage history of *Hamlet* is sufficient to show us why nearly every recent English actor of serious ambition has essayed a part which, speaking from the theatrical point of view, is scarcely the most effective of the great creations of Shakespeare. We know the players of the past only by tradition, and tradition speaks more certainly and more clearly of their impersonations of Hamlet than of any other part. The actor of to-day who plays Hamlet therefore challenges comparison with the immortals, and if he achieve a considerable degree of success, he considers, not unnaturally, that he has graduated in the highest branch of his art, and is forthwith entitled to his diploma. It was Richard Burbage, "a paragon of good acting," who played Hamlet on the first production of the tragedy; but even his success in the character was eclipsed by that of Betterton, whose interpretation, according to Pepys, was "the best part man ever acted." If contemporary criticisms are not altogether misleading, Garrick's Hamlet was little inferior to Betterton's, though in its own day it had a rival in what Hazlitt describes as "the swcet, the graceful, the gentlemanly Hamlet" of John Philip Kemble. Then

there was the fine interpretation of Charles Mayne Young, which held the stage for a quarter of a century. To the merits of Edmund Kean's Hamlet we have also the testimony of Hazlitt, who, though he protests against the actor's lapses into violence and even virulence, declares that at least one part of his performance was "the finest commentary ever made on Shakespeare." According to G. H. Lewes, Macready's Hamlet was "bad, due allowance being made for the intelligence it displayed." On the other hand, as we have already seen, this critic considered Fechter's rendering one of the very best he had ever witnessed.

The night of the 21st of October, 1874, may fairly be described as the ordeal of Henry Irving. He was deliberately putting his fate to the touch: it was a question whether he would "gain or lose it all." His experiment with Hamlet at Manchester was doubtless a trying one, but, compared with the experiment at the Lyceum, it was positively trivial. Nobody could blame a young provincial player for failing where many fine actors of wide experience had only partially succeeded. At that time he could afford to fail; but failure after the triumph of Mathias, of Charles I., of Richelieu, would have been sheer disaster. He therefore approached his task fearfully weighted with responsibility, terribly alive to the consequences of defeat.

Excitement among play-goers gradually reached a white heat. Early in the afternoon a dense crowd had assembled at the Lyceum pit door. The chances of the new exponent of Hamlet became the talk of the town, and it seemed as if there were Irvingites and anti-Irvingites even before the curtain rose. The revival, as a whole, interested the audience scarcely at all. The

cast was by no means of a sensational character; no attempt was made to mount the play with exceptional magnificence or originality. Some of the scenery was, indeed, already familiar to Lyceum play-goers, the churchyard scene which had done duty in *Eugene Aram* being used as the background for the burial of Ophelia. The vast audience had come to see Irving's Hamlet, and their whole attention was concentrated upon it.

The cordial welcome which he received when first he came on the stage must have convinced him that the tribunal to which he appealed would err, if it erred at all, on the side of generosity. In costume and make-up the player studiously avoided anything which should be ostentatiously impressive, and yet nobody could doubt for an instant that he was indeed the Prince of Denmark. "We see before us," wrote one critic, "a man and a prince, in thick robed silk, and a jacket, or *patelot*, edged with fur; a tall, imposing figure, so well dressed that nothing distracts the eye from the wonderful face; a costume rich and simple, and relieved alone by a heavy chain of gold; but, above and beyond all, a troubled, wearied face, displaying the first effects of moral poison. The black, disordered hair is carelessly tossed about the forehead, but the fixed and wrapt attention of the whole house is directed to the eyes of Hamlet: the eyes which denote the trouble—which tell of the distracted mind. Here are 'the windy suspiration of forced breath,' 'the fruitful river in the eye,' the 'dejected 'haviour of the visage.'"

During the first two acts Irving must have endured acute mental agony. They passed without applause,



leave alone enthusiasm. It was, to use the simile of M. Augustin Filon, "Irving's Marengo; up to the third act the battle seemed lost. . . . The third act produced a complete change. From the scene with the players and the description of the imaginary portraits the evening was a continual triumph. The public had before them a Hamlet they had never dreamed of; all the Hamlets that had ever appeared upon the stage seemed to have been assimilated by an original and powerful temperament, and blended harmoniously into one."

The curtain fell to such music of cheers as must have banished from the player's mind all those terrible doubts of his capacity to achieve success in the highest branch of his art which assailed him on that memorable night. The infinitely various field of the Shakespearian drama was at last open to him.

The first and most important quality of Irving's Hamlet was the original reflection by which it was distinguished; it was evident that, line by line, word by word, he had thought out the character of the Sweet Prince with the most loving care, the most tender sympathy. What he lacked in beauty of appearance and elocutionary grace he made up in sheer intellectual power. He spoke, as it were, from brain to brain, and it was therefore more easy to forgive him the eccentricity of his gait and the occasionally jarring and piping quality of his voice. Even more than Edwin Booth he discarded deliberate point-making: he did not at any moment have recourse to a *coup de théâtre*. He formed a definite conception of the character, and did nothing for the sake of momentary applause which was inconsistent with that conception. His Hamlet was

before all things natural. He showed us a prince who was self-contemplative, and ill-disposed to tragic enterprise. Learned beyond his years, he was by no means a moody and precocious metaphysician. Essentially loving and affectionate, he was a man, and not a mere wavering creature of weak and undecided purpose. His sense of justice was too keen to allow him to sit down quietly while an infamous crime was unpunished. So soon as his vague instinct that he should avenge the death of his father had been steeled to determination by supernatural command, he set to work in grim earnest to perform a mission which was entirely repugnant to his kindly temperament. Though he loved Ophelia more than forty thousand brothers, he was strong enough to sacrifice his passion to his duty; but there was that in his nature which prevented him from moving swiftly to vengeance. The fell clutch of circumstance had not made him mad, but it had driven him into the mysterious borderland between sanity and madness.

It was to be expected that an audience should show some hesitancy in accepting a Hamlet in which traditional points were deliberately left out. As soon, however, as the spectators realised what Irving was endeavouring to achieve, they treated him to lavish encouragement. "Slowly and reluctantly," says Mr. Joseph Knight, "it [the audience] came under the spell of the conception, and at the close of the third act it was riveted in a way such as we read of in records of past performances, but scarcely, so far as English acting is concerned, can recall." His triumph in the play-scene was unequivocal. When the King and Queen have taken their places, Hamlet appears by no

means pre-occupied. He watches Claudius intently, but in such a way as to pass unnoticed. At length the conscience-stricken King starts from his chair, and Hamlet, leaping from the ground, darts to the royal place, and falls into it with a hysterical scream of triumph. The thing was finely conceived and executed, and it produced an intense effect upon the audience.

In the scene in the Queen's chamber Irving played with infinite pathos. He discarded the customary material counterfeit presentments, and brought home to his mother the contrast between his father and Claudius by means of imaginative pictures. In this daring innovation he has since been followed by Salvini. At the conclusion of the scene, according to Oxenford, "the audience were worn out by the absorbing power of the actor. Mr. Irving had, indeed, sufficient strength and enthusiasm for the churchyard scene and the fencing scene, but the audience found it well-nigh impossible to stretch their necks and concentrate their attention any longer. However, nothing daunted, Mr. Irving went on, unflagging and resistless. His fencing and his expert murder of the King will be added to the innumerable other excellencies of his Hamlet." And then Oxenford concludes his criticism with this definite and sweeping statement: "In a word, no such actor and no such performance have been seen in our time."

The tremendous outburst of enthusiastic approval with which Irving's Hamlet was greeted called forth an energetic reply from a large minority whom he had failed to satisfy. To the caricaturists he was a godsend, for his physical peculiarities easily lent themselves to

pictorial humour. Articles in the major magazines and hasty pamphlets were written, attacking and defending the impersonation. Amongst these one of the most intelligent was a *brochure* by Mr. E. R. Russell, the brilliant editor of the *Liverpool Daily Post*, who two or three years ago was knighted for his services to journalism. Sir Edward is one of the most valiant of the complete Irvingites, and he is never at a loss to give his reasons for the faith that is in him. In an article in *The Quarterly Review* for April 1883, entitled *The English Stage*, the success of Irving's Hamlet is attributed solely to "the splendour of the scenery," "the beauty and archæological fitness of the dresses," and "the enormous pains to captivate the eye." As we have already seen, no special pains in these matters were taken.

Interest in Irving's performance was not confined to professional critics or habitual play-goers. Tennyson, among other distinguished men, has left us his impression of it. "It is not a perfect Hamlet," he says; "the pathetic side of him is well done, and the acting original. I liked it better than Macready's."

In this Tennyson agrees with Mr. W. P. Frith, who writes in his *Autobiography*:

"In a few characters, such as Virginius, William Tell, Rob Roy, and some others, Macready was, I think, unapproachable; but to compare his Hamlet or Shylock with Irving's rendering of these characters would be disastrous for Macready."

We find some echoes of the controversy which raged round the new impersonation in the delightful correspondence of Edward Fitzgerald. Writing to Fanny Kemble in 1875, "Old Fitz" says: "Spedding tells

me that Irving's Hamlet is simply *Hideous*—a strong word for Spedding to use. . . . Irving I never could believe in as Hamlet after seeing part of his famous performance of a melodrama called *The Bells* three or four years ago. But the Pollocks, and a large world beside, think him a prodigy—whom Spedding thinks a monster!”

A little while later Fitzgerald sent the actress a photograph of Irving, with the following curious comment:—“’Tis a handsome face, surely; and one that should do for Hamlet—if it were not for that large ear! Do you notice? I was tempted to send it to you, because it reminds me of some of your family: your father most of all, in that famous picture of the Trial Scene.”

Fanny Kemble failed to see the resemblance, for we read in her volume, *Further Records*:

“I have seen some of the accounts and critiques of Mr. Irving's acting, and rather elaborate ones of his ‘Hamlet,’ which, however, give me no very distinct idea of his performance, and a very hazy one indeed of the part itself as seen from the point of view of his critics. Edward Fitzgerald wrote me word that he looked like my people, and sent me a photograph of him to prove it, which I thought much more like Young than my father or uncle. I have not seen a play of Shakespeare's acted I do not know when. I think I should find such an exhibition extremely curious as well as entertaining.”

The likeness of Irving to the Kembles, however, seems to have struck one member of that family, Miss Adelaide Kemble, afterwards Mrs. E. T. Sartoris, who, on the production of *The Bells*, wrote to the actor that

he reminded her vividly of some of the most illustrious of her relatives.

So great was the interest in the Lyceum production of *Hamlet* that it had a record run of two hundred consecutive nights. I give here, side by side with the original cast, that of the revival of the play on the occasion of the opening of the theatre under Irving's management in 1878.

## HAMLET.

October 31st, 1874.

December 30th, 1878.

<i>Hamlet</i> . . .	MR. HENRY IRVING . . .	MR. HENRY IRVING.
<i>Claudius</i> . . .	MR. THOMAS SWINBOURNE .	MR. FORRESTER.
<i>Polonius</i> . . .	MR. CHIPPENDALE . . .	MR. CHIPPENDALE.
<i>Laertes</i> . . .	MR. E. LEATHES . . .	MR. F. COOPER.
<i>Horatio</i> . . .	MR. G. NEVILLE . . .	MR. T. SWINBOURNE.
<i>Ghost</i> . . .	MR. THOMAS MEAD . . .	MR. T. MEAD.
<i>Osric</i> . . .	MR. H. B. CONWAY . . .	MR. KYRLE BELLEW.
<i>Rosencrantz</i> . .	MR. WEBBER . . .	MR. A. W. PINERO.
<i>Guildenstern</i> . .	MR. BEAUMONT . . .	MR. ELWOOD.
<i>Marcellus</i> . . .	MR. F. CLEMENTS . . .	MR. GIBSON.
<i>Bernardo</i> . . .	MR. TAPPING . . .	MR. ROBINSON.
<i>Francisco</i> . . .	MR. HARWOOD . . .	MR. TAPPING.
<i>Reynaldo</i> . . .	. . . . .	MR. CARTWRIGHT.
<i>1st Player</i> . . .	MR. BEVERIDGE . . .	MR. A. BEAUMONT.
<i>2nd Player</i> . . .	MR. NORMAN . . .	MR. EVERARD.
<i>Priest</i> . . .	MR. COLLETT . . .	MR. COLLETT.
<i>Messenger</i> . .	MR. BRANSCOMBE . . .	MR. HARWOOD.
<i>1st Gravedigger</i> .	MR. COMPTON . . .	MR. S. JOHNSON.
<i>2nd Gravedigger</i> .	MR. CHAPMAN . . .	MR. A. ANDREWS.
<i>Gertrude</i> . . .	MISS G. PAUNCEFORT . . .	MISS G. PAUNCEFORT.
<i>Player Queen</i> . .	MISS HAMPDEN . . .	MISS SEDLEY.
<i>Ophelia</i> . . .	MISS ISABEL BATEMAN . .	MISS ELLEN TERRY.

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENERY.

## ACT I.

SCENE I. *Elsinore : A Platform before the Castle.* SCENE II.—*A Room of State in the Castle.* SCENE III.—*A Room in the House of Polonius.* SCENE IV.—*The Platform.* SCENE V.—*A more remote part.*



## ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Room in the House of Polonius.* SCENE II.—*A Room of State in the Castle.*

## ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Room of State in the Castle.* SCENE II.—*A Room in the Castle.* SCENE III.—*Another Room in the same.*

## ACT IV.

SCENE.—*A Room in the Castle.*

## ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Churchyard.* SCENE II.—*Outside the Castle.* SCENE III.—*A Hall in the Castle.*

When, on the 30th of December, 1878, Irving appeared as Hamlet in the first performance given at the Lyceum since it had come under his own management, he had the immense advantage of the help of Miss Ellen Terry. Her exquisite performance of Ophelia induced Irving to give greater prominence to Hamlet's absorbing passion for the ill-fated daughter of Polonius. "The chief grace in the new representation," said the *Athenæum*, "consisted in the delivery of the speeches to Ophelia in the third act. In this the mocking tone did not for a moment hide the profound emotion under which Hamlet laboured, and the hands which repulsed her petitioning hands trembled with passionate longing." In other respects Irving's impersonation was not materially changed, although he had spent great pains in developing his conception, down to the most minute details. In the course of a brief speech, addressed to the audience at the end of the play, Irving said :

"I cannot allow this event to pass without telling you how much I thank you for the way in which you have received my efforts. As long as I am lessee here, rest assured I shall do the utmost for the elevation



of my art and to increase your comfort. In the name of one and all concerned in the production of this evening I thank you from my soul. To produce the *Hamlet* of to-night I have worked all my life, and I rejoice to think that my work has not been in vain. You have attested in a way that goes quickest to the actor's heart that you have been satisfied. When the heart is full the weakness of man's nature manifests itself, and I feel now like a child."

*Hamlet* was played a hundred and eight times, and it has been revived on several other occasions.

## CHAPTER XIV

### MACBETH AND OTHELLO

SEPTEMBER 1875—APRIL 1876

IN 1875, while *Hamlet*, the greatest of all his managerial triumphs, was being played to overflowing audiences, the "old Colonel," as Mr. Bateman was called by his friends, died suddenly on the 22nd of March. The evening before he had accompanied Henry Irving to a public banquet at a restaurant in Pall Mall. To the loss which he had sustained by the death of his old friend, Irving made the following reference in a speech from the stage of the Lyceum:

"In my pride and pleasure at your approval I cannot but remember the friend whose faith in me was so firm, a friend to whom my triumphs were as dear—ay, dearer, I believe, than had they been his own. The announcement last autumn that I, a young actor, was thought fitted to attempt *Hamlet* came from a warm and generous heart, and I cannot but deeply feel that he to whose unceasing toil and unswerving energy we owe in great measure the steadfast restoration of the poetic drama to the stage,—I cannot but regret that he will never meet me, as he has done on so many occasions, to confirm your approval with affectionate enthusiasm and tears of joy."

It is evident from this warm tribute that Irving

realized to the full the services which Mr. Bateman had rendered him. He was not, however, in any sense "discovered" by Mr. Bateman, or, indeed, by anybody else. On the death of her husband the management of the Lyceum passed into the hands of Mrs. Bateman, who produced *Macbeth* on the 18th of September, 1875.

In spite of Irving's sensational success as Hamlet, there were a large number of persons who professed to regard him as a meteor rather than a fixed star in the theatrical firmament. It was suggested that he owed his vogue entirely to the tactics of that very adroit showman Mr. Bateman, who, in some mysterious way, had succeeded in palming off a grotesque comedian as a great tragic actor. Bereft of his astute American manager, Irving, it was prophesied, would quickly sink to the respectable level above which he should never have risen.

In choosing *Macbeth* as the next production, those who controlled the destinies of the Lyceum played the game of the malcontents for them. Their courage, perhaps, deserved admiration, but it savoured of recklessness. Years of thought had gone to the making of Irving's Hamlet: he attempted Macbeth too soon after an ordeal which had been of the most trying kind. It must be remembered that twenty-four years ago he had not acquired to the full the art of making his physical resources go as far as possible, so that his limitations as Macbeth were painfully evident.

In 1888, as we shall see later on, he showed us, speaking broadly, the same Macbeth as in 1875, but his increased command of the technics of his art enabled him much more nearly to realize his conception than

was at first the case. The systematic defect of his original impersonation was that he made Macbeth inadequately masculine. He was never at any moment the splendidly villainous object of universal horror, but rather an abject victim of self-torture who called aloud for pity. When the central figure of the play is thus made sympathetic at the expense of its majestic qualities, it ceases to deserve Hallam's description, as "the most sublime and impressive drama which the world has ever beheld."

Irving's comparative failure came as a boon to his detractors, who could not or would not see that he failed as a strong man fails, that there were individual merits in his performance which were possible only to an actor of the rarest and finest qualities. They made haste to write his epitaph when he was, as it were, only on the threshold of his theatrical career. The following are the casts of the two revivals:

## MACBETH.

	<i>September 18th, 1875.</i>	<i>December 27th, 1888.</i>
<i>Duncan</i> . . .	MR. HUNTLEY . . .	MR. HAVILAND.
<i>Malcolm</i> . . .	MR. BROOKE . . .	MR. WEBSTER.
<i>Donalbain</i> . . .	MISS CLAIR . . .	MR. MARTIN HARVEY.
<i>Macbeth</i> . . .	MR. HENRY IRVING . . .	MR. HENRY IRVING.
<i>Banquo</i> . . .	MR. FORRESTER . . .	MR. WENMAN.
<i>Macduff</i> . . .	MR. SWINBOURNE . . .	MR. GEORGE ALEXANDER.
<i>Lennox</i> . . .	MR. STUART . . .	MR. OUTRAM.
<i>Ross</i> . . .	MR. G. NEVILLE . . .	MR. TYARS.
<i>Menteith</i> . . .	MR. MORDAUNT . . .	MR. ARCHER.
<i>Angus</i> . . .	. . . . .	MR. LACY.
<i>Caithness</i> . . .	MR. SEYMOUR . . .	MR. LEVERTON.
<i>Fleance</i> . . .	MISS W. BROWN . . .	MASTER HARWOOD.
<i>Siward</i> . . .	MR. HENRY . . .	MR. HOWE.
<i>Young Siward</i> . . .	MR. SARGENT . . .	
<i>Seyton</i> . . .	MR. NORMAN . . .	MR. FENTON.
<i>Doctor</i> . . .	MR. BEAUMONT . . .	MR. STUART.

<i>Porter</i> . . .	MR. COLLETT . . .	MR. JOHNSON.
<i>Attendant</i> . . .	MR. BRANSCOMBE . . .	MR. ROE.
<i>Murderers</i> . . .	MESSRS. BUTLER AND TAPPING,	MESSRS. BLACK AND CARTER.
<i>Apparitions</i> . . .	{ MISS BROWN . . .	MR. BAIRD.
	{ MR. HARWOOD . . .	MISS HARWOOD.
	{ MISS K. BROWN . . .	MISS HOLLAND.
<i>Lady Macbeth</i>	MISS BATEMAN (MRS. CROWE)	MISS ELLEN TERRY.
<i>Gentlewoman</i> . . .	MISS MARLBOROUGH . . .	MISS COLERIDGE.
<i>Hecate</i> . . .	MISS PAUNCEFORT . . .	MISS IVOR.
<i>Witches</i> . . .	{ MR. MEAD . . .	MISS MARRIOTT.
	{ MR. ARCHER . . .	MISS DESBOROUGH.
	{ MR. HUNTLEY . . .	MISS SEAMAN.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Desert Place.* SCENE II.—*A Heath.* SCENE III.—*Palace of Forres.* SCENE IV.—*Macbeth's Castle.* SCENE V.—*Exterior of Macbeth's Castle.* SCENE VI.—*Macbeth's Castle.*

ACT II.

SCENE—*Court of Macbeth's Castle.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Palace at Forres.* SCENE II.—*Park near the Palace.* SCENE III.—*Palace at Forres.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Pit of Acheron.* SCENE II.—*England: A Cave.* SCENE III.—*Dunsinane: Ante-room in the Castle.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Country near Dunsinane.* SCENE II.—*Dunsinane: Room in the Castle.* SCENE III.—*Birnam Wood.* SCENE IV.—*Dunsinane Castle.* SCENE V.—*Dunsinane Hill.* SCENE VI.—*Outer Court of the Castle.*

The first run of *Macbeth* consisted of eighty performances. Undeterred by his failure to achieve a second great Shakespearian success, Irving proceeded on what some of his critics were pleased to consider his wild career, and played Othello for the first time on the 14th of February, 1876. Once more his admirers treated him to a demonstration of loyalty. "Kean, in the

height of his triumphs," wrote one who was present, "awoke no greater enthusiasm than is now displayed ; and Macready, during his best days, inspired no equal interest. It is necessary to turn, indeed, to France, and the career of Rachel, when she stood forth the confessed queen of tragedy, if we would find instances of parallel excitement. With the sound of frantic and reiterated applause still ringing in the ears, it is impossible to doubt the sincerity of public conviction. Rightly or wrongly, a considerable portion of the play-going public sees in Mr. Irving the actor of the day, or of the future, and regards the Lyceum management as possessing the strongest claim upon its consideration."

Irving's Othello was generally accounted decidedly inferior to his Hamlet, though somewhat better than his Macbeth. In approaching the study of Othello, Irving was perhaps unduly influenced by the desire to get away as far as possible from Salvini's interpretation of the part which, by some critics who saw both, was declared to be finer than that of Edmund Kean. Irving's excellent sense no doubt warned him that he was totally unfitted to compete with the great Italian in depicting a fiery African whose animalism is hidden beneath a thin veneer which is the result of long and intimate contact with Europeans. Nor could he hope to rival him in magnificence of bearing, and variety and subtlety of declamation. Irving's Othello was so conceived that the sensual qualities, as well as the storm and stress of passion, were rendered comparatively inconspicuous. He showed us a man essentially European in the quality of his refinement and the delicacy of his culture. His Othello, always intelligent, often powerful and impressive, and sometimes even

electrical, was own brother to his Hamlet and Macbeth. If the weakest point in these parts was the actor's want of physical resources, that point was more noticeable than ever in his Othello. The new Othello was disappointing, in spite of the intelligence which had gone to the making of it; but it was interesting in no ordinary degree. It must be counted to Irving for righteousness that he is invariably interesting. Some active emotion, whether it be of pain or pleasure, he is certain to excite: he cannot be commonplace if he tries. Even the heroically commonplace is outside his range, and he fails most completely and disastrously when he attempts to impersonate what Mr. Walkley has happily termed "drab heroes."

*Othello* had a run of less than two months. It was again revived, as we shall see later on, at the Lyceum, under memorable circumstances, in 1881. The following is the cast of the performance on the 14th of February, 1876:

## OTHELLO.

<i>Othello</i>	.	.	.	.	MR. HENRY IRVING.
<i>Duke</i>	.	.	.	.	MR. COLLETT.
<i>Brabantio</i>	.	.	.	.	MR. MEAD.
<i>Roderigo</i>	.	.	.	.	MR. CARTON.
<i>Gratiano</i>	.	.	.	.	MR. HUNTLEY.
<i>Lodovico</i>	.	.	.	.	MR. ARCHER.
<i>Cassio</i>	.	.	.	.	MR. BROOKE.
<i>Iago</i>	.	.	.	.	MR. FORRESTER.
<i>Montano</i>	.	.	.	.	MR. BEAUMONT.
<i>Antonio</i>	.	.	.	.	MR. SARGENT.
<i>Julio</i>	.	.	.	.	MR. TAPPING.
<i>Marco</i>	.	.	.	.	MR. HARWOOD.
<i>Paulo</i>	.	.	.	.	MR. BUTLER.
<i>Desdemona</i>	.	.	.	.	MISS ISABEL BATEMAN.
<i>Emilia</i>	.	.	.	.	MISS BATEMAN (MRS. CROWE).

Lords, Gentlemen, Officers, etc.



## ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Street in Venice.* SCENE II.—*Another Street.* SCENE III.—*A Council Chamber.*

## ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The Harbour at Cyprus.* SCENE II.—*A Street in Cyprus.*  
SCENE III.—*The Court of the Guard.*

## ACT III.

SCENE.—*Othello's House.*

## ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Othello's House.* SCENE II.—*A Street in Cyprus.* SCENE III.—*Exterior of Iago's House.*

## ACT V.

SCENE.—*A Bedchamber.*

## CHAPTER XV

### TENNYSON'S QUEEN MARY, AND OTHER PLAYS

1876

OF the six plays by Tennyson which have been acted in London, four were produced for the first time at the Lyceum. Three of these—*Queen Mary*, *The Cup*, and *Becket*—we owe to the enterprise of Henry Irving. The fourth—*The Foresters*—was performed once only at the Lyceum, for copyright purposes, on the 17th of March, 1892. In spite of the many changes which were made in *Queen Mary* previous to its production on the 18th of April, 1876, it remained a poem rather than a play, and, although received with rapturous enthusiasm by a representative first-night audience, it hardly promised well for Tennyson's success as a dramatist. As Philip of Spain Irving gave a study of a king as complete as, though entirely different from, his Charles I. In appearance he absolutely realized the cold, proud, sneering, unsympathetic sovereign of the laureate's imagination; but his part was comparatively small, and afforded him few great opportunities. The present Lord Tennyson tells us that his father "always pronounced Irving's Philip to be a consummate performance, ranking it with Salvini's Othello. He was further of opinion that Philip and Richard III. were Irving's best parts."

Tennyson was not present at the first performance of *Queen Mary*; but Robert Browning was in the house, and sent the author this delightful account of the proceedings :

"19, WARWICK CRESCENT, W.

"April 19th, 1876.

"MY DEAR TENNYSON,—I want to be among the earliest who assure you of the complete success of your *Queen Mary* last night. I have more than once seen a more satisfactory performance of it, to be sure, in what Carlyle calls 'the Private Theatre under my own hat,' because there and then not a line nor a word was left out: nay, there were abundant 'encores' of half the speeches: still, whatever was left by the stage scissors suggested what a quantity of 'cuttings' would furnish one with an after-feast.

"Irving was very good indeed, and the others did their best, nor so badly.

"The love as well as admiration for the author was conspicuous; indeed, I don't know whether you ought to have been present to enjoy it, or were not safer in absence from a smothering of flowers and deafening 'tumult of acclaim.' But Hallam was there to report, and Mrs. Tennyson is with you to believe. All congratulations to you both from

"Yours affectionately ever,

"ROBERT BROWNING."

The most interesting portrait of Irving in existence is that by Whistler, which represents him in the character of Philip of Spain. It is to be hoped that this beautiful and dignified work will ultimately find a

place in one of the national collections. The cast of *Queen Mary* was as follows:

### QUEEN MARY.

<i>Philip of Spain</i>	. . . . .	MR. HENRY IRVING.
<i>Gardiner</i>	. . . . .	MR. SWINBOURNE.
<i>Simon Renard (Spanish Ambassador)</i>	. . . . .	MR. BROOKE.
<i>Le Sieur de Noailles (French Ambassador)</i>	. . . . .	MR. WALTER BENTLEY.
<i>Edward Courtenay, Earl of Devon</i>	. . . . .	MR. CARTON.
<i>Lord William Howard</i>	. . . . .	MR. MEAD.
<i>Sir Thomas White (Lord Mayor of London)</i>	. . . . .	MR. HUNTLEY.
<i>Count de Feria, attending on Philip</i>	. . . . .	MR. BEAUMONT.
<i>Master of Woodstock</i>	. . . . .	MR. COLLETT.
<i>Lord Petre</i>	. . . . .	MR. STUART.
<i>Messenger</i>	. . . . .	MR. SARGENT.
<i>Steward to Princess Elizabeth</i>	. . . . .	MR. NORMAN.
<i>Attendant</i>	. . . . .	MR. BRANSCOMBE.
<i>Mary of England</i>	. . . . .	MISS BATEMAN (MRS. CROWE).
<i>Princess Elizabeth</i>	. . . . .	MISS VIRGINIA FRANCIS.
<i>Lady Clarence</i>	. . . . .	MISS PAUNCEFORT.
<i>Lady Magdalen Dacre</i>	. . . . .	MISS CLAIRE.
<i>Joan</i>	} Two country wenches . . . .	{ MRS. HUNTLEY.
<i>Tib</i>		
		{ MR. ARCHER.
<i>Maid of Honour to Princess Elizabeth</i>	. . . . .	MISS HALL.
<i>Alice (one of the Queen's Women)</i>	. . . . .	MISS ISABEL BATEMAN.

On the 8th of June a performance of *The School for Scandal* was given at Drury Lane for the benefit of John Baldwin Buckstone, in recognition of his services as an actor for nearly half a century, and of his lesseeship of the Haymarket for twenty-three years. Irving played Joseph Surface, among his companions being Phelps (Sir Peter), Sam Emery (Sir Oliver Surface), Charles Mathews (Charles Surface), Buckstone (Sir Benjamin Backbite), Miss Neilson (Lady Teazle), Mrs. Stirling (Mrs. Candour), Mrs. A. Mellon (Lady Sneerwell), and Miss L. Buckstone (Maria). Those who filled minor parts included Messrs. Ryder,

Coghlan, Bancroft, David James, Benjamin Webster, Howe, and Charles Santley, who sang *Here's to the Maiden*. When it is added that Mrs. Keeley delivered an address specially composed by H. J. Byron, it will be seen that the occasion was indeed no ordinary one.

Tennyson's play, whatever its artistic merits, did not possess the elements of a popular success. Its place was accordingly soon taken by a revival of *The Bells* and *The Belle's Stratagem*. Irving's Doricourt, interesting enough in 1866, had now developed into one of his most finished impersonations. To pass in an interval of a few minutes from the tragic Mathias to the courtly hero of Mrs. Cowley's amusing comedy, and to fill both parts with complete distinction, was a feat which conclusively proved the actor's versatility. In 1881 Miss Ellen Terry played Letitia Hardy in exquisite fashion in another revival of the play. The following are the casts side by side :

#### THE BELLE'S STRATAGEM.

	June 12th, 1876.	April 16th, 1881.
<i>Doricourt</i> . . .	MR. HENRY IRVING	MR. HENRY IRVING.
<i>Mr. Hardy</i> . . .	MR. J. ARCHER	MR. HOWE.
<i>Sir George Touchwood</i> .	MR. BEAUMONT	MR. BEAUMONT.
<i>Flutter</i> . . .	MR. BROOKE.	MR. W. TERRISS.
<i>Saville</i> . . .	MR. BENTLEY	MR. PINERO.
<i>Villers</i> . . .	MR. CARTON.	MR. ELWOOD.
<i>Courtall</i> . . .	MR. STUART.	MR. TYARS.
<i>Letitia Hardy</i> . . .	MISS ISABEL BATEMAN	MISS ELLEN TERRY.
<i>Mrs. Racket</i> . . .	MISS VIRGINIA FRANCIS	MISS SOPHIE YOUNG.
<i>Lady Francis Touchwood</i> .	MISS LUCY BUCKSTONE	MISS BARNETT.

Irving's benefit took place on the 23rd of the month, when he played Eugene Aram, Doricourt, and Count Tristan in *King's René's Daughter*. In the last piece,

in the part of Iolanthe, Miss Helen Faucit (Lady Martin) made her last appearance on the London stage.

In the autumn the Lyceum company went on tour in the provinces, and visited besides the capitals of Scotland and Ireland. For Henry Irving the journey was a triumphal progress: everywhere he was received with enthusiasm, and in Manchester and Dublin his splendid welcome rivalled that given him on the first performances of *Hamlet* and *Richelieu* at the Lyceum. In Manchester nearly eighteen thousand people went to the theatre during his visit, and greeted him as a hero who, by reason of his long sojourn amongst them, was, in a special sense, their own. On the 9th of December the graduates and undergraduates of Trinity College assembled in the dining-hall of Dublin University and presented him with an address containing the following words:

“The engagement which you bring to a conclusion to-night at the Theatre Royal has given the liveliest pleasure to the graduates and undergraduates of Trinity College, Dublin. To the most careful students of Shakespeare you have, by your scholarly and original interpretation, revealed new depths of meaning in *Hamlet*, and aroused in the minds of all a fresh interest in our highest poetry. As Charles I., in the new drama of our countryman Mr. Wills, you have set forth the dignity of fallen grandeur. You have depicted in *The Bells*, with a terrible fidelity, the Nemesis that waits on crime.

“For the delight and instruction that we (in common with our fellow-citizens) have derived from all your impersonations, we tender you our sincere thanks.

“But it is something more than gratitude for personal pleasure or personal improvement that moves us to offer this public homage to your genius. Acting such as yours ennobles and elevates the stage, and serves to restore it to its true function as a potent instrument for intellectual and moral culture. Throughout your too brief engagement our stage has been a school of true art, a purifier of the passions, and a nurse of heroic sentiments; you have even succeeded in commending it to the favour of a portion of society, large and justly influential, who usually hold aloof from the theatre.”

On the night of the day on which the address was presented, *Hamlet* was played before a huge audience, which included the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and the Duke of Connaught. The pit was crowded with five hundred junior members of the university. On Irving's first appearance, at the end of each act, and when the curtain fell, he was received with such deafening roars of applause as have fallen to the lot of no other English actor of this century.

While much criticism, decent, though strongly adverse, legitimately protested against the exaggerated homage which Irving received on all hands, not a few writers and caricaturists of ill repute, or of no repute at all, sought to cover him with every species of insult and ridicule. An anonymous letter was published in 1876 in one of the lower-class comic papers which, for outrageous and malicious vituperation, it would be very hard to beat. The actor was accused, amongst other things, of deliberately debauching the public taste by providing it with spectacles unrivalled for their lust and cruelty.



So far from elevating the drama, it was declared that he had merely "canonized the cut-throat."

Irving would have taken no notice of raving of this kind, but the writer unfortunately proceeded to make a definite charge which it was imperative on him to disprove.

"With the hireling faction of the press at your command," said the writer, "you have induced the vulgar and unthinking to consider you a model of histrionic ability. . . . If your performance of Othello be trumpeted to the four winds of heaven by the gang of time-serving parasites in your employ, you will increase murder and degrade the drama to the level of a Penny Dreadful."

In view of this definite statement as to suborning the Press, Irving thought it his duty to take the matter into court. The result, as might be expected, proved that he had been libelled in scandalous fashion. Later in the year Salvini played in London, and those to whom the popularity of Irving was as a red rag to a bull found in the visit of the Italian tragedian a much-desired opportunity to cause Irving personal annoyance of a particularly unpleasant kind. It was reported that the English player was so insanely jealous of the foreigner that he would not even pay him the compliment of going to see him act.

It had been determined to give Salvini a complimentary benefit before he left England, and in order to promote the scheme a circular was issued in the names of the leading dramatic artists of the day. Amongst these the name of Irving did not appear, and the omission lent some colour to the rumours which had been so industriously circulated. In a dignified

letter to the Press, Irving explained that his relations with Signor Salvini were of a cordial kind, adding, for the benefit of the busy-bodies who were trying to make mischief, that "he was sure that Signor Salvini (whom, after all, it alone concerned) would be the last to impute any paltry motive to the absence of his [Irving's] name to the Round Robin circular." These incidents serve to show that Irving's life has not been a serene progress towards good fortune, but that, on the other hand, he has endured a full share of envious misrepresentation.

## CHAPTER XVI

### RICHARD III

JANUARY 29TH, 1877

SOME time before the production of *Richard III.* at the Lyceum, a picture in one of the comic papers represented Colley Cibber addressing a bust of Shakespeare, and importuning the bard to recognize his services in so editing *The Tragedy of King Richard the Third* as to enable it to keep the stage instead of following the majority of its companions into permanent banishment. If anybody has deserved Shakespeare's gratitude in the matter of this play [it is Henry Irving, who compelled Cibber's version to share for once and all the oblivion] into which Garrick's *Hamlet* and Nahum Tate's *King Lear* had preceded it. [His courage was the greater in that Macready had tried a similar experiment at Covent Garden with unfortunate results.] But even Macready, though he professed "to restore the original character and language of Shakespeare," was unable to resist the temptation of retaining some of Cibber's tinsel alterations. The part of the hump-backed King was one in which Macready had succeeded in rivalling Edmund Kean, who had thoroughly identified himself with the character. Charles Kean and Phelps had both played Richard

without conspicuous success. In 1851 the Bateman children appeared in parts of the play at the St. James's, a proceeding which Professor Morley characterized as "a nuisance by no means proportioned to the size of its perpetrators." The smaller child played the King. Here surely was a case in which the mania for "infant phenomena" produced the most exquisitely ludicrous results. The promoter of this astounding undertaking was, appropriately enough, the late Mr. Barnum.

[*Richard III.*, as presented at the Lyceum on the 29th of January, 1877, was "strictly the original text, without interpolations, but simply with such omissions and transpositions as have been found essential for dramatic representation." The drama was carefully staged, some beautiful pictures being provided for it by Mr. Hawes Craven. Irving's associates were capable, but by no means brilliant, so that the interest of the revival was concentrated on his impersonation of the principal character.

It was obvious at the time that amongst the greater Shakespearian parts none was better suited to him than *Richard III.*] and it was accordingly a matter for surprise that he had not played it immediately after *Hamlet*, instead of risking so much on so trying and uncertain an experiment as a new reading of *Macbeth*. [The success of *Richard III.* was all but universally admitted. In the words of the *Globe*: "the production might be said to constitute at once a rehabilitation of a play and of an actor."]

Leigh Hunt remarks that Macready succeeded best in "the livelier and more animal part" of *Richard*, and Kean in "the more sombre and perhaps deeper

part." [Irving was most successful in the earlier scenes of the play, and it is probable that no actor has ever portrayed the malignant and sarcastic side of Richard with greater effect. So universal is his scorn of his fellow-men that he seems incapable of particular and individual hatred. If this sinister creature condescended to hate nobody, still less was it possible for him to love anybody. To this incarnation of craft and dissimulation men are as counters in a game, to be used or to be removed as best suits his purpose. He proceeds from infamy to infamy with cold calculation, never allowing momentary passion to endanger his enterprise. In playing Richard III., Irving's mannerisms were to some extent, as it were, in the picture.] It was easy to believe that Richard possessed eccentricities of gait, gesture, and utterance, which Hamlet could scarcely have had if he were, as Ophelia says, "the glass of fashion and the mould of form." Irving was wise in so depicting Richard that the King was not wholly swallowed up in the villain. Though he was indeed evil personified, we were not allowed to forget that he was the occupant of a throne and head of a state.

Oxenford perhaps gave utterance to the general estimate of Irving's Richard III. when he said that it surpassed all his previous impersonations, and was beyond all comparison better than Macbeth and Othello, and, looked at from all points of view, ranked higher than Hamlet, in spite of the conspicuous graces of that interpretation. Although the later scenes of *Richard III.* compared unfavourably with the earlier ones, his rendering of the last act was full of fine and fiery qualities. The speech when the last of the ghosts has vanished, which runs—

I am a villain: yet I lie, I am not.  
 Fool, of thyself speak well: fool, do not flatter.  
 My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,  
 And every tongue brings in a several tale,  
 And every tale condemns me for a villain.  
 Perjury, perjury, in the high'st degree;  
 Murder, stern murder, in the direst degree;  
 All several sins, all used in each degree,  
 Throng to the bar, crying all, Guilty! guilty!  
 I shall despair. There is no creature loves me;  
 And if I die, no soul shall pity me:  
 Nay, wherefore should they, since that I myself  
 Find in myself no pity to myself?—

was delivered with an agonized accent of despair which sent a thrill through the hushed, attentive audience. The duel with Richmond, with which the drama concludes, was fought with superb courage. Long after Richard's physical power was exhausted, he seemed to fight desperately by sheer force of indomitable will power.] Fine as was Irving's Richard when he first presented it, familiarity with the part has enabled him recently to make it still more impressive. The following was the cast of the first performance:

### RICHARD III.

<i>King Edward IV.</i>	. . . . .	MR. BEAUMONT.
<i>Edward, Prince of Wales</i>	} <i>Sons of the King</i>	MISS BROWN.
<i>Richard, Duke of York</i>		MISS HARWOOD.
<i>George, Duke of Clarence</i>	. . . . .	MR. WALTER BENTLEY.
<i>Richard, Duke of Gloucester</i>	} . . . . .	MR. HENRY IRVING.
( <i>afterwards Richard III.</i> )		
<i>Henry, Earl of Richmond</i>	} . . . . .	MR. E. H. BROOKE.
( <i>afterwards Henry VII.</i> )		
<i>Cardinal Bourchier</i> ( <i>Archbishop of Canterbury</i> )		MR. COLLETT.
<i>Duke of Buckingham</i>	. . . . .	MR. T. SWINBOURNE.
<i>Duke of Norfolk</i>	. . . . .	MR. HARWOOD.
<i>Lord Rivers</i> ( <i>Brother to King Edward's Queen</i> )		MR. CARTON.
<i>Lord Hastings</i>	. . . . .	MR. R. C. LYONS.

<i>Lord Stanley</i>	. . . . .	MR. A. W. PINERO.
<i>Lord Lovel</i>	. . . . .	MR. SERJEANT.
<i>Marquis of Dorset</i>	} <i>Sons of the Queen</i>	{ MR. SEYMOUR.
<i>Lord Grey</i>		
<i>Sir Richard Ratcliff</i>	. . . . .	MR. LOUTHER.
<i>Sir William Catesby</i>	. . . . .	MR. J. ARCHER.
<i>Sir James Tyrrel</i>	. . . . .	MR. A. STUART.
<i>Sir James Blunt</i>	. . . . .	MR. BRANSCOMBE.
<i>Sir Robert Brackenbury</i>	. . . . .	MR. H. SMYLES.
<i>Dr. Shaw</i>	. . . . .	MR. TAPPING.
<i>Lord Mayor</i>	. . . . .	MR. ALLEN.
<i>First Murderer</i>	. . . . .	MR. T. MEAD.
<i>Second Murderer</i>	. . . . .	MR. HUNTLEY.
<i>Queen Margaret (Widow of Henry VI.)</i>	. . . . .	MISS BATEMAN.
<i>Queen Elizabeth</i>	. . . . .	MISS PAUNCEFORT.
<i>Duchess of York</i>	. . . . .	MRS. HUNTLEY.
<i>Lady Anne</i>	. . . . .	MISS ISABEL BATEMAN.

Pages, Nobles, Ladies, Soldiers, Aldermen, Messengers, etc.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*A Street.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*King's Ante-Chamber.* SCENE II.—*Prison in the Tower.*  
SCENE III.—*Ante-Chamber.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Chamber in the Tower.* SCENE II.—*Hastings' House.*  
SCENE III.—*Council Chamber in Baynard's Castle.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Presence Chamber.* SCENE II.—*Room in the Tower.*  
SCENE III.—*Tower Hill.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Richmond's Encampment.* SCENE II.—*The Royal Tent.*  
SCENE III.—*Richmond's Tent.* SCENE IV.—*The Battle-field.*

On the first night of *Richard III.* Irving was presented by his friend Mr. Chippendale with the sword used by Edmund Kean when he played the part, and shortly after another friend gave him the Order of St. George worn by Kean in the same character. In the course



of the run the Baroness Burdett-Coutts presented him with a ring which formerly belonged to Garrick, "in recognition of the gratification derived from his [Mr. Irving's] Shakespearian representations: uniting to many characteristics of his great predecessors in histrionic art (whom he is too young to remember)



KEAN'S BOOTS, SHOES, AND SWORD. FROM IRVING'S COLLECTION.

the charm of original thought, giving delineations of new forms of dramatic interest, power, and beauty." When asked some time ago what was his chief recreation, Irving characteristically replied, "Acting." His hobby is the accumulation of relics of his great predecessors in the art, and the gifts of the Baroness Burdett-Coutts and Mr. Chippendale were therefore very gratifying to him. To the kindness of his old friend Toole he is indebted for the trophy presented



THE KEMBLE PRESENTATION. PRESENTED TO IRVING BY MR. TOOLE.



THE KEMBLE SHIELD. PRESENTED TO IRVING BY MR. HENRY KEMBLE.

to Kemble on his retirement from the stage, of which an illustration is given here ; while the Kemble Shield is another of his treasures. Lord Rosebery recently gave him another ring with an interesting theatrical history, and Robert Browning presented him with the empty purse found in Edmund Kean's pocket at his death. Amongst his other treasures are a gold watch which once belonged to Kemble, and a silver one formerly the property of Edwin Forrest. In addition to these fascinating things, Irving has a fine theatrical library and a great collection of play-bills.



*London Stereoscopic Co. photo.]*

IRVING AS RICHARD III.

*From a drawing,*

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE LYONS MAIL, LOUIS XI., AND VANDER-DECKEN

MAY 1877—DECEMBER 1878

THE success of Richard III. was destined to be followed up by an unequivocal triumph in a melodrama with which Irving's name and fame will be for ever associated. *Le Courier de Lyons*, by MM. Moreau, Siraudin, and Delacour, was performed for the first time in Paris, at the Théâtre de la Gaîté, on the 16th of March, 1850. The drama, as all the world knows, is founded on one of the most appalling miscarriages of justice in the entire history of the administration of criminal law. In 1796 a trial took place in France, the main feature of which was the mistaking of the identity of Joseph Lesurques, an honourable and innocent man, for that of the leader of a desperate gang of thieves, called Dubosc. Lesurques was guillotined in the place of the real criminal, and four years passed by before the truth of the matter was found out and the memory of the unfortunate Lesurques cleared of the stain which lay upon it. In Père la Chaise is a monument bearing the following inscription:—*À la mémoire de Joseph Lesurques, victime de la plus déplorable des erreurs humains. 31 Octobre 1796. Sa veuve et ses enfants, martyrs tous deux sur la terre, tous deux sont réunis au ciel.* The sensation caused by *Le Courier de Lyons*

in Paris soon led to its being transplanted to London. It was seen at the Standard, at the Victoria, and at the Adelphi, where Leigh Murray played the dual rôle. In 1854 Charles Reade produced a version of it for Charles Kean, who made a great success in the double character. Kean was supported, amongst others, by Addison, David Fisher, and Miss C. Leclercq, while Miss Kate Terry, as the boy Joliquet, gave one of her admirable child impersonations. When it was decided, after arrangement with Mrs. Charles Kean, to revive the play at the Lyceum in Irving's interest, Mrs. Bateman went to Charles Reade for some alterations, and a materially improved version was the result. The first performance at the Lyceum took place on the 19th of May, 1877, with the following cast :

## THE LYONS MAIL.

<i>Joseph Lesurques</i> . . . . .	}	MR. HENRY IRVING.
<i>Dubosc (Captain of a gang of robbers known as the Five Hundred)</i>		
<i>Jerome Lesurques</i> . . . . .		MR. T. MEAD.
<i>Didier</i> . . . . .		MR. E. H. BROOKE.
<i>Joliquet</i> . . . . .		MISS LYDIA HOWARD.
<i>M. Dorval</i> . . . . .		MR. F. TYARS.
<i>Lambert</i> . . . . .		MR. LOUTHER.
<i>Guerneau</i> . . . . .		MR. GLYNDON.
<i>Postmaster at Montgeron</i> . . . . .		MR. COLLETT.
<i>Coco</i> . . . . .		MR. BRANSCOMBE.
<i>Garçon at Cafe</i> . . . . .		MR. TAPPING.
<i>Guard</i> . . . . .		MR. HARWOOD.
<i>Postilion</i> . . . . .		MR. ALLEN.
<i>Courriol</i> . . . . .		MR. R. C. LYONS.
<i>Chappard</i> . . . . .		MR. HUNTLEY.
<i>Fouinard</i> . . . . .		MR. ARCHER.
<i>Durochat</i> . . . . .		MR. HELPS.
<i>Julie</i> . . . . .		MISS VIRGINIA FRANCIS.
<i>Jeannette</i> . . . . .		MISS ISABEL BATEMAN.
Gendarmes, Citizens, etc.		

In the opinion of so competent a judge of acting as Mr. John Hollingshead, Irving's performance in *The Lyons Mail* was finer than that of Charles Kean, for he writes in his autobiography: "I had seen Charles Kean in 1854 in this part, when he first produced the piece, and never thought I should see a better representation of the dual characters. I was mistaken. Irving's Dubosc and Lesurques is one of those powerful and monumental performances which come to us once in fifty years."

Be this as it may, it is difficult to conceive any impersonation more convincing than that by Irving of these two sharply contrasted characters, which have no point of similarity save mere outward physical resemblance. Indeed, so perfectly does he differentiate the two men that, as the play proceeds, it is difficult to imagine that Dubosc and Lesurques were ever for a moment mistaken for one another. Lesurques was so kindly, so transparently honest, that wherever he went he created, as it were, an atmosphere of benevolence, while the ferocious brutality of Dubosc betrayed itself in even the least significant of his actions. If, then, there was a defect in Irving's performance, it lay in the *too* complete differentiation of the characters. It may be true that Irving is always Irving, but in *The Lyons Mail* he proves that, if he cannot completely obliterate his own powerful personality, he can so adapt it as to produce all needful illusion. In this play his mannerisms do not in any way discount his performance. In walk, voice, facial expression, even in such a detail as the movement of the hands, Dubosc and Lesurques are two men between whom a whole world of difference lies. In the scene in the garret in the

third act, when Dubosc is found gloating over the preparations for the execution of Lesurques, Irving is at his greatest. Not even in *The Bells* does he produce a more thrilling effect. It is not the sort of thing one cares to see frequently—this portrayal of bestial degradation and grotesque and hideously callous villainy is enough to start grown men screaming. In acute contrast to it is the interview in which Lesurques's father, believing him guilty, tempts him to suicide in order to avoid the crowning indignity of the scaffold, as well as that other more piteous interview, in which the condemned man takes leave of his daughter. Here Irving has rare opportunities of exhibiting that variety of pathos which is entirely within his range, and he makes the most of them. His support on the first production of the play was, on the whole, of the weakest. Not a few of the critics condemned the exponents of some of the minor parts with vehemence. The success of the revival owed nothing to *ensemble* and little to scenic effect, and must fairly be attributed entirely to the rendering of the chief character.

From this somewhat uncomfortably violent melodrama Irving, after a brilliant provincial tour, passed to *Louis XI.*, another play in which Charles Kean was much admired. Casimir Delavigne, the writer of *Louis XI.*, though a dexterous play-wright, was destitute alike of invention and poetic inspiration. He paid to a score of great writers, including Byron, Scott, Shakespeare, Bernadin de Saint-Pierre, and Victor Hugo, the practical homage of imitation. *Louis XI.* is drawn in blacker colours by the French play-wright than by Sir Walter Scott, who roughly adapted the character from the account given by Commynes. No attempt was



made in the play to follow history, the famous death scene itself being wholly fictitious, for, so far from dying in an agony of remorse, Louis' end was peaceful enough. But though Delavigne availed himself to the full of his right as a dramatist to remodel history according to his own fancy, he failed to produce even an interesting play, leave alone one of literary importance.

But from the point of view of the ambitious actor, *Louis XI.* possesses one great merit: the part of the King affords him a magnificent opportunity; indeed, the play is in reality nothing but an excuse for the one commanding part. In this connection Mr. Joseph Knight tells us: "In the days of Charles Kean it used to be said—jocosely, of course—that that actor wished to see his company reduced to himself and a ballet. This object is nearly attained in *Louis XI.*, where, after the principal personage has once appeared, he retains possession of the stage, and stands in front of accessories who serve no purpose but to put his figure into bolder relief." Of Irving's performance Mr. Knight adds: "In the early acts Mr. Irving is seen to the highest advantage. The representation of the cowardly, ferocious, and bigoted monarch, alternately menacing with his fierce and wolfish wrath those who offend him, and coaxing and cajoling those from whom he has anything to gain, is one of the most carefully thought out conceptions the modern stage has seen. If, towards the close, it does not inspire the same interest, it is, as we have said, because the character itself lacks variety and is too constantly ignoble, and because the actor in the stronger scenes relapses into old and intolerable faults. The points at which he does this are few."

The display of ferocious senility which Irving gives as Louis XI. is perhaps to this day the finest thing of its kind which he has achieved. By turns cajoling and fierce, the man, it may be argued, is too abject ever to be kingly, but the blame must in all fairness be attached, not to the interpreter, but to the author of the part. The merits of the death scene have been widely discussed. On the one hand it has been described as an orgy of false realism; on the other, it was lauded up to the skies as a powerful performance, without rival in the history of the contemporary stage. To me the prolonged death agonies of the royal monster, as depicted by Henry Irving, if they were fascinating, were nevertheless repellent. One looked hoping, and yet at the same time fearing, that the end would come. A great dramatist might have written the scene so that the essential horror of it should be mitigated by subtle touches of sorrow and sympathy; but Casimir Delavigne was in no sense a great tragic writer. Irving's impersonation called forth the enthusiasm of M. Jules Claretie, who wrote: "As Louis XI. Mr. Irving has been judged superior to Ligier. Dressed with historical accuracy, he is admirable in the comedy element of the piece, and the chief scenes with the monk and Nemours. The hands, lean and crooked as a Harpagon—the fine hands whose character is changed with each of his *rôles*—aid his words. And how striking in its realism is the last scene, representing the struggle between the dying King and his fate!"

Perhaps the most interesting and complete analysis was that of Oxenford. "The play," he wrote, "is a commonplace and somewhat meagre sketch, crudely outlined, not always with strict conformity to nature, from the traces

left by Commynes and worked up by Scott and Victor Hugo. But within this bare outline what a marvellous work of creative art has been elaborated by Mr. Irving—bold in conception, strong in light and shade, and filled in with details of infinite nicety and variety! Naturally, the first question that will be asked is how the representation compares with that of Charles Kean, which must be vividly remembered by all who saw it. The answer is, that while as remarkable as Mr. Kean's Louis for the vivid strength and truth of its general conception Mr. Irving's is more delicately and minutely wrought, and the general features of Louis have with greater care and closeness of observation been associated with a lifelike assumption of increasing senility. But besides this, it must be recorded that the last act is vastly superior to anything that it entered into the mind of Charles Kean to effect. If there is any point in which the latest English Louis XI. is inferior to the first, it is in the abject pleading to Nemours for life, to which Mr. Kean's peculiar power of rapid and impetuous utterance gave thrilling effect. There is no other point at which Mr. Irving must yield the palm."

Another writer considered that "the greatest success of all was the still and silent impassibility into which the King sank so absolutely that the courtiers and his son supposed it to be death."

The first act of the play, in which Louis does not appear, is extremely tedious, and the whole of the drama suffers from the entire lack of female interest. It therefore altogether depends on the interpretation of the principal part for its hold on the audience.

The following is the cast of the first performance at the Lyceum :

## LOUIS XI.

By CASIMIR DELAVIGNE, adapted by DION BOUCICAULT. First produced at the Lyceum on the 9th of March, 1878.

<i>Louis XI.</i>	. . . . .	MR. HENRY IRVING.
<i>Nemours</i>	. . . . .	MR. F. TYARS.
<i>The Dauphin (aged 16)</i>	. . . . .	MR. ANDREWS.
<i>Cardinal D'Alby</i>	. . . . .	MR. COLLETT.
<i>Philip de Commines</i>	. . . . .	MR. F. CLEMENTS.
<i>Count de Dreux</i>	. . . . .	MR. PARKER.
<i>Jacques Coitier (King's Physician)</i>	. . . . .	MR. J. FERNANDEZ.
<i>Tristan l'Ermite (Executioner)</i>	. . . . .	MR. W. LENTLEY.
<i>Oliver le Dain (Barber)</i>	. . . . .	MR. J. ARCHER.
<i>François de Paule</i>	. . . . .	MR. T. MEAD.
<i>Monseigneur de Lude</i>	. . . . .	MR. HOLLAND.
<i>The Count de Dunois</i>	. . . . .	MR. LANETON.
<i>Marcel</i>	} Peasants . . . . .	MR. E. LYONS.
<i>Richard</i>		MR. SMITH.
<i>Didier</i>		MR. BRANSCOMBE.
<i>Officer of the Royal Guard</i>	. . . . .	MR. HARWOOD.
<i>Montjoie (Herald of France)</i>	. . . . .	MR. CARTWRIGHT.
<i>Toison d'Or (Herald of Burgundy)</i>	. . . . .	MR. TAPPING.
<i>King's Attendants</i>	. . . . .	MESSRS. EDWARDS AND SIMPSON.
<i>Marie (Daughter of Commines)</i>	. . . . .	MISS VIRGINIA FRANCIS.
<i>Jeanne (a Peasant)</i>	. . . . .	MRS. ST. JOHN.
<i>Martha (Wife of Marcel)</i>	. . . . .	MRS. CHIPPENDALE.

Lords, Guards, Bishops, Priests, Pages, etc.

After a run of three months *Louis XI.* was withdrawn, and on the 8th of June, 1878, a new poetic drama in four acts, entitled *Vanderdecken*, was seen for the first time. The play was the work of Mr. Percy Fitzgerald and Mr. W. G. Wills, the former of whom has given the following account of it in his volume on Henry Irving :

"A few years before this time (1878) Wagner's weird opera, *The Flying Dutchman*, had been performed in London, and the idea occurred to many, and not

unnaturally, that here was a character exactly suited to Irving's methods. He was, it was often repeated, the ideal Vanderdecken. He himself much favoured the suggestion, and after a time the 'Colonel' entrusted me and my friend Wills with the task of preparing a piece on the subject. For various reasons the plan was laid aside, and the death of the manager and the adoption of other projects interfered. It was, however, never lost sight of, and after an interval I got ready the first act, which so satisfied Irving that the scheme was once more taken up. After many attempts and shapings and re-shapings, the piece was at last ready, Wills having undertaken the bulk of the work, I myself contributing, as before, the first act. The actor himself furnished some effective situations, notably the strange and original suggestion of the Dutchman's being cast upon the shore and restored to life by the waves." \*

The play was not a great popular success, but Irving has never looked more impressive, more weirdly picturesque, than as Vanderdecken.

While Irving was gaining the theatrical triumphs to which this chapter is devoted, he was making those appearances at great social functions which, apart from his profession, have won for him so prominent a place among the public men of our time. In August he laid the foundation-stone of the Harborne and Edgbaston Institute at Birmingham, when he was presented with an address. Some time previously he had been elected president of the Perry Bar Institute. In recognition of the distinction thus conferred on him he addressed to the secretary the following very characteristic letter :

"To be numbered with the representatives of so

admirable an institution is, I can sincerely say, one of the greatest distinctions I can hope to attain. The honour which has been conferred upon me is the more appreciated as I recognise in it a tribute not so much to myself as to my profession, and to the elevating character of the Drama as one of the intellectual influences of the time. By this proof of their esteem for an actor, the Council of the Perry Bar Institute have offered the best answer to those who have misrepresented the true spirit of the stage, as inconsistent with the moral and educational progress of the nation."

## CHAPTER XVIII

### CLAUDE MELNOTTE AND SHYLOCK

DECEMBER 30TH, 1878—SEPTEMBER 1880

ALTHOUGH since the death of her husband Mrs. Bateman had been nominally at the head of affairs at the Lyceum, the theatre, speaking from the artistic standpoint, was in reality Irving's theatre. Towards the end of 1878, Mrs. Bateman retired, leaving him in sole possession of the play-house of which he had long been the chief attraction. Of his policy as a manager I shall have something to say at the close of this book; let it suffice here to state that he gave immediate proof of his acumen and intelligence by choosing as the principal actress of his company Miss Ellen Terry, in spite of the fact that up to then she had had few opportunities of distinguishing herself in the classical drama. But Irving relied on her Portia in the Bancroft revival at the old Prince of Wales's Theatre and her Olivia at the Court, and we know now how abundantly his faith was justified. If I say little of Miss Terry's impersonations in these pages it is only because I have already had the pleasure of dealing with them in a book entirely devoted to them. Irving inaugurated his first season of management with a revival of *Hamlet*, the first performance of which took place on the 30th of December, 1878. On the 17th of



the following April *The Lady of Lyons* was revived on a magnificent scale. Claude Melnotte is a part for which Irving is both mentally and physically unsuited. Where he should have been buoyant and rapturous he was solemn, and, at times, irritable. The Claude Melnotte of Macready, according to Lady Pollock, was 'stiff, serious, and over-emphatic.' The criticism might well stand for Irving's interpretation of the character. The following was the cast of the Lyceum revival :

### THE LADY OF LYONS.

<i>Claude Melnotte</i>	. . . . .	MR. IRVING.
<i>Colonel Damas</i>	. . . . .	MR. WALTER LACY.
<i>Beauseant</i>	. . . . .	MR. FORRESTER.
<i>Glavis</i>	. . . . .	MR. KYRLE BELLEW.
<i>Monsieur Deschappelles</i>	. . . . .	MR. C. COOPER.
<i>Landlord</i>	. . . . .	MR. S. JOHNSON.
<i>Gaspar</i>	. . . . .	MR. TYARS.
<i>Captain Dupont</i>	. . . . .	MR. CARTWRIGHT.
<i>Major Desmoulins</i>	. . . . .	MR. ANDREWS.
<i>Notary</i>	. . . . .	MR. TAPPING.
<i>Servant</i>	. . . . .	MR. BRANSCOMBE.
<i>Servant</i>	. . . . .	MR. HOLLAND.
<i>Madame Deschappelles</i>	. . . . .	MRS. CHIPPENDALE.
<i>Widow Melnotte</i>	. . . . .	MISS PAUNCEFORT.
<i>Janet</i>	. . . . .	MISS MAY SEDLEY.
<i>Marian</i>	. . . . .	MISS HARWOOD.
<i>Pauline</i>	. . . . .	MISS ELLEN TERRY.

When *The Lady of Lyons* was withdrawn a series of revivals were played. On the 25th of July Irving gave a remarkable proof of the extent of his range by appearing in the fourth act of *Richelieu*, the third act of *Louis XI.*, the first act of *Richard III.*, the fourth act of *Charles I.*, the third act of *Hamlet*, and as Jeremy Diddler in *Raising the Wind*. Here surely was an opportunity of appreciating Irving's art in epitome.

On the 27th of September the younger Colman's drama, *The Iron Chest*, was revived with a view to afford Irving an opportunity of playing Sir Edward Mortimer, a rôle in which Edmund Kean gained one of the most magnificent of his triumphs. The part was "created" at Drury Lane in 1796 by John Philip Kemble, who failed in it dismally and brought down upon himself the wrath of the author. In a preface to the play, published after the fiasco, Colman says that "Frogs in a marsh, flies in a bottle, wind in a crevice, a preacher in a field, the drone of the bag-pipe, all—all yielded to the inimitable and soporific monotony of Mr. Kemble." Colman further estimates the services rendered to him by the actor in this caustic fashion :

For his illness . . . . .	Compassion.
For his conduct under it . . . .	Censure.
For refusing to make an apology . .	A smile.
For his making an apology . . . .	A sneer.
For his mismanagement . . . . .	A groan.
For his acting . . . . .	A hiss.

The play, when revived by Elliston at the Hay-market, proved successful, and the author, thus partially mollified, did not reprint his outrageous rhodomontade in the second edition published soon after. *The Iron Chest*, which is founded on Godwin's well-known *Adventures of Caleb Williams*, is dull and out of date, and Macready was quite justified in the contempt in which he held it. The story of Irving's preparation of the play for reproduction at the Lyceum is told in interesting fashion by Mr. Clement Scott:

"Brought face to face with the old-fashioned *Iron*

*West*, Mr. Irving, no doubt, encountered considerable difficulty. Here was a play, half opera and half tragedy, studded with glees and madrigals by Storace, made familiar by tradition, known to every musical society in the kingdom, and constructed in direct opposition to modern theories. What, therefore, has been done to render it in harmony with the spirit of the age, preserving, at the same time, the weird air of poetical gloom, inseparable from such a curious and fantastic composition? To begin with, the music has been reduced to a minimum. The famous 'Five Times by the Taper's Light' is given only in the orchestra, where, in the course of the evening, the whole musical score is heard. In fact, the only music sung on the stage is the glee 'Jolly Friars Tipped Here,' which will be found in the third act, that is brought to a conclusion with 'Huzza! huzza! we'll drink and we'll sing.' It is a three-act play in the original, and Mr. Irving has entirely reconstructed it in four acts and ten scenes. The hybrid, the semi-Elizabethan, semi-Carolian, costume has been discarded, and the period of Caleb Williams, 1792, selected for the play, which is mounted, moreover, with strict attention to the furniture and architecture of the late eighteenth century, admirable alike in detail and effect, and presenting to the audience very noble and impressive stage-pictures."

Of Irving's performance of Sir Edward Mortimer it is safe to say that the part has never been so finely played by any actor except Edmund Kean. If he was less impressive as Mortimer than as Louis XI., it was because the latter part is without the grotesque relief to which he can give such immense effect. The following was the cast of the revival;

# THE IRON CHEST.

<i>Sir Edward Mortimer</i> . . . . .	MR. IRVING.
<i>Captain Fitzharding</i> . . . . .	MR. J. H. BARNES.
<i>Wilford (secretary to Mortimer)</i> . . . . .	MR. NORMAN FORBES.
<i>Adam Winterton (steward to Mortimer)</i> . . . . .	MR. J. CARTER.
<i>Rawbold</i> . . . . .	MR. MEAD.
<i>Samson Rawbold</i> . . . . .	MR. S. JOHNSON.
<i>Peter</i> . . . . .	MR. BRANSCOMBE.
<i>Gregory</i> . . . . .	MR. TAPPING.
<i>Armstrong</i> . . . . .	MR. F. TYARS.
<i>Orson</i> . . . . .	MR. C. COOPER.
<i>Robbers</i> . . . . .	MESSRS. FERRAND, CAL- VERT, ETC.
<i>Robbers' Boy</i> . . . . .	MISS HARWOOD.
<i>Lady Helen</i> . . . . .	MISS FLORENCE TERRY.
<i>Blanche</i> . . . . .	MISS MYRA HOLME.
<i>Barbara</i> . . . . .	MISS ALMA MURRAY.
<i>Judith</i> . . . . .	MISS PAUNCEFORT.

Servants, Robbers, etc.

The decision of Irving, that *The Merchant of Venice* should be his next great Lyceum production was probably influenced in no slight measure by the fact that he had spent his holiday in cruising round the Italian coasts in the Baroness Burdett-Coutts's yacht, *The Walrus*. Like most people who see it for the first time, he was enchanted with the Queen of the Adriatic, and made up his mind to transfer so much of the atmosphere of the place as was possible to the stage of his theatre. Messrs. Hawes Craven, Telbin Hann, and Cuthbert set to work to design scenery on a magnificent scale; costumes at once appropriate and beautiful were produced; and Mr. Hamilton Clarke specially composed the overture and incidental music. The first performance took place on the 1st of November, 1879.

An outward and visible sign of the intense interest taken in the revival was a discussion, in the pages of the *Theatre*, as to the intention of Shakespeare in creating the character of Shylock. Amongst the controversialists were Mr. Frederick Hawkins, Sir Theodore Martin, Dr. Furnivall, and the late James Spedding. According to the first of these critics, Shakespeare designed *The Merchant of Venice* as "a plea for toleration towards the Jews." Acted as Shylock was by Henry Irving, the play did amount to such a plea - the Jew, so far from being a villain, was actually heroic, and, bloodthirsty though it may sound, I confess that I was distinctly disappointed when, by means of a miserable legal quibble, Shylock was cheated of his pound of Antonio's flesh.

For my own part I do not believe that Shakespeare sat down to write this fine comedy with the object of teaching any particular moral or ethical lesson. He would be daring indeed who should circulate *The Merchant of Venice* as a pro-Jewish tract: to say the least of it, the weapon would be as dangerous to him who wielded it as to him against whom it was used.

Shylock, as we all know, was for a long time played as a low-comedy part. When, however, Macklin had gained a triumph by his positively terrifying impersonation of the Jew, it was admitted on all hands that it had been tragically designed. Kean seems to have attempted a more sympathetic rendering than any of his predecessors, for we find that Hazlitt complains that he gave too much relief to the "hard, impenetrable, dark groundwork of the character which was formed of morose, sullen, inveterate malignity." The Shylock of Henry Irving is undoubtedly malignant, but, if the

phrase may be allowed to pass, it is justifiably malignant. What there is in this man of revenge must be directly attributed to ages of torturing and senseless persecution.

In his *Play-house Impressions* Mr. Walkley comments in very interesting fashion on this impersonation. "It was in the romantic rather than the tragic repertory of Shakespeare," he tells us, "in the figures painted from the rich fantastic palette of the Italian Renaissance, that one waited for him [Irving] confidently. Shylock, Iago, Malvolio, Benedick, these are all flamboyant parts, and he took possession of them by right of temperament. To say that his 'was the Jew that Shakespeare drew' would be to quote Pope's doggerel inopportunist. It was the Jew idealised in the light of the modern occidental reaction against the *Judenhetze*, a Jew already conscious of the Spinozas, the Sidonias, the Disraelis, who were to issue from his loins."

It seems to me that anybody who reads *The Merchant of Venice* dispassionately will share Mr. Walkley's opinion that Irving's Jew was not the Jew that Shakespeare drew. But if one can bring oneself to admit the actor's point of view, his interpretation undoubtedly ranks amongst the finest performances of our time. It owed nothing to tradition, save at one or two points where tradition was so overwhelming that even Irving had perforce to bow to it. As one followed the player through scene after scene of this tragic comedy, one felt that enormous pains had gone to the making of the interpretation. Irving is nearly always better in speaking direct from brain to brain than from heart to heart. His command over our intellect is more certain than his appeal to our emotions, and if Shylock is less purely intellectual than

Iago, it nevertheless affords admirable opportunities to the intellectual actor.

Of the criticisms which appeared in the press when the Lyceum version was first produced, none were more interesting than those of the *Saturday Review* and the *Spectator*. The following is part of an article which appeared in the former on the 8th of November, 1876:

"Mr. Irving presents Shylock as a picturesque figure, with an air as of a man feeling the bitterness of oppression, and conscious of his own superiority in all but circumstance to the oppressor—a feeling which is finely indicated when, in talk with Antonio, he touches the Christian merchant, and, seeing the action resented, bows deprecatingly, with an affectation of deep humility. He dwells with concentrated bitterness on the expressions of hatred to Antonio in the speech beginning 'How like a fawning publican he looks'; and here, in the implacable determination of 'If I can catch him once upon the hip, I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him,' we have the prologue, as it were, to the intense revengefulness of the last scene. It may be noted that since the first night Mr. Irving's performance has gained in leading up consistently to its climax—as consistently, that is, as is possible in the case of a human creature worked on by mixed emotions which sometimes baffle scrutiny. The point which on the first night seemed most striking to many people in the general scope of the actor's representation was that his Shylock was intended to be, before all things, dignified, and it was thought that his acting in the scene when he bewails the loss of his daughter and his ducats was at variance with the rest of the performance. It would perhaps be neither easy nor desirable to make Shylock altogether dignified at



this point ; but it is not the less true that Mr. Irving has improved the rendering of this scene, and, with it, the whole value of his representation.

“To return, however, to Mr. Irving’s first scene, we may note specially the bitterness of subdued scorn in the speech beginning ‘Signior Antonio, many a time and oft in the Rialto you have rated me,’ and the diabolical mockery of good humour with which he proposes the ‘merry bond.’ In the next scene, in which the Jew appears, we have again his hatred and desire for revenge marked strongly in the resolution to go forth to supper ‘in hate, to feed upon the prodigal Christian,’ and to part with Launcelot ‘to one that I would have him help to waste his borrowed purse’; and at the end of the act Mr. Irving has introduced a singularly fine touch of invention. Lorenzo has fled with his stolen bride and her stolen money, and a crowd of masquers has crossed the stage and disappeared over the picturesque bridge with laughter and music. Then Shylock is seen, lantern in hand, advancing, bent in thought ; and, as he comes close to his robbed and deserted house, the curtain falls. The effect, however, would, to our thinking, be doubled if the curtain had not fallen for a moment and been raised again just before this appearance of Shylock—if the masquers had disappeared in sight of the audience, and the sounds of revelry had died away in the distance. It may be conjectured that the dropping of the curtain signifies the interval of time which might naturally elapse between the elopement and Shylock’s return ; but this is, we think, needless. Mr. Irving, in the scene already referred to of the third act, is now less vehement than might have been expected ; the Jew’s passion seems to

have exhausted him, but is not for that the less intense in itself. He is overweighted with trouble, and the delivery of the words 'no ill luck stirring, but what lights o' my shoulders; no sighs, but o' my breathing; no tears, but o' my shedding,' is charged with the pathos of the heaviest grief, and it may be the importance given by the actor's feeling and art to this passage which makes one think that less than its due value is given to the following passage about Leah's ring.

"It is, however, in the fourth act, as is fitting, that the actor's complete triumph is attained, and in this there seems to us no room for anything but admiration. From the moment of his entrance to that of his finding his revenge torn from him he is the very incarnation of deadly, resistless hatred. While he listens to the Duke's speech in mitigation he has the horrible stillness and fascination of the rattlesnake. When he answers, his speech is that of a man possessed of his purpose, coldly tenacious of his rights. His object has been gained, and the passion which has been concentrated on it will not deign to waste itself in supporting a position that is unassailable. His scorn of Gratiano's railings seems bitter from habit, and not because he is one whit moved by them. There is something appalling in his aspect when he stands waiting for the long desired moment with the knife in one hand and the scales in the other, and his pointing to the bond with the knife as he asks, 'Is it so nominated in the bond?' is admirably conceived and executed. When the moment of defeat arrives it strikes him like lightning, but its effect, like that of his expected triumph, is so powerful that it cannot find expression in any accustomed use of gesture or attitude. He is still in his despair as in his victory; but it is the

stillness of one suffering instead of threatening death. Where he before inspired terror, he cannot now but command respect for the very awfulness of his downthrow. He leaves the Court with a dignity that seems the true expression of his belief in his nation and himself. His mind is occupied with greater matters than the light jeers of Gratiano, and to these jeers he replies with three slow downward movements of the head, which are infinitely expressive of his acceptance of that which has befallen him and of his power to bear himself nobly under its weight. 'Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing,' and what he says at this moment seems empty indeed when answered with this silent eloquence. Nothing could be finer than Mr. Irving's acting at this point, which is the climax of a scene the power and imagination of which can scarcely be rivalled."

Not less enthusiastic was the critic of that most staid of journals, the *Spectator*, which, in its issue of the 8th of November, contained the following notice :

"Probably, to every mind, except that of Shakespeare himself—in which all potential interpretations of his Shylock, as all potential interpretations of his Hamlet, must have had a place—the complex image which Mr. Irving presented to a crowd more or less impressed with notions of their own concerning the Jew whom Shakespeare drew, was entirely novel and unexpected ; for here is a man whom none can despise, who can raise emotions both of pity and of fear, and make us Christians thrill with a retrospective sense of shame. Here is an usurer indeed, but no more like the customary modern rendering of that extortionate lender of whom Bassanio borrowed. 'monies,' than the merchants *dei*

*Medici* were like pawnbrokers down Whitechapel way : an usurer indeed, and full of 'thrift,' which is rather the protest of his disdain and disgust for the sensuality and frivolity of the ribald crew out of whom he makes his 'Christian ducats,' than of his own sordidness ; an usurer indeed, but above all, a Jew ! One of the race accursed in the evil days in which he lives, but chosen of Jehovah in the olden time, wherein lie his pride, and belief, and hope—the best of that hope being revenge on the enemies of himself and all his tribe, now wearing the badge of sufferance, revenge, rendered by the stern tenets of a faith which teaches that 'the Lord, his God, is a jealous God, taking vengeance,' not only lawful, but holy. A Jew, in intellectual faculties, in spiritual discipline, far in advance of the time and the country in which he lives, shaken with strong passion sometimes, but for the most part fixed in a deep and weary disdain. He is an old man, but not very aged, so that the epithet 'old' used to him is not to be mistaken for anything but the insolence it means ; a widower—his one pathetic mention of his 'Leah' was as beautiful a touch as ever has been laid on the many-stringed lyre of human feeling—the father of a daughter who amply justifies his plain mistrust of her, an odious, immodest, dishonest creature, than whom Shakespeare drew no more unpleasant character, and to whom one always grudges the loveliest love-lines that ever were spoken, especially when it is borne in mind that the speaker, Lorenzo, was at best a receiver of stolen goods. Mr. Irving's Shylock is a being quite apart from his surroundings. When he hesitates and questions with himself why he should go forth to sup with those who would scorn him if they could, but can only ridicule him, while

the very stealthy intensity of scorn of them is in him, we ask, too, why should he? He would hardly be more out of place in the 'wilderness of monkeys,' of which he makes his sad and quaint comparison, when Tubal tells him of that last coarse proof of the heartlessness of his daughter 'wedded with a Christian,'—the bartering of his Leah's ring. What mean, pitiful beings they all are, poetical as is their language, and fine as are the situations of the play, in comparison with the forlorn, resolute, undone, baited, betrayed, implacable old man who, having personified his hatred of the race of Christians in Antonio, whose odiousness to him, in the treble character of a Christian, a sentimentalist, and a reckless speculator, is less of a mere caprice than he explains it to be. He reasons calmly with the dullards in the Court concerning this costly whim of his, yet with a disdainful doubt of the justice that will be done him; standing almost motionless, his hands hanging by his sides—they are an old man's hands, feeble, except when passion turns them into gripping claws, and then that passion subsides into the quivering of age, which is like palsy—his grey, worn face, lined and hollow, mostly averted from the speakers who move him not; except when a gleam of murderous hate, sudden and deadly, like the flash from a pistol, goes over it, and burns for a moment in the tired, melancholy eyes! Such a gleam there came when Shylock answered Bassanio's palliative commonplace, with—

'Hates any man the thing he would not kill?'

At the wretched gibes of Gratiano, and the amiable maundering of the Duke, the slow, cold smile, just parting the lips and touching their curves as light

touches polished metal, passes over the lower part of the face, but does not touch the eyes or lift the brow. This is one of Mr. Irving's most remarkable facial effects, for he can pass it through all the phases of a smile, up to surpassing sweetness. Is it a fault of the actors or of ours that this Shylock is a being so absolutely apart, that it is impossible to picture him as a part of the life of Venice, that we cannot think of him 'on the Rialto' before Bassanio wanted 'monies,' and Antonio had 'plunged,' like any London city-man in the pre-'depression' times, that he absolutely begins to exist with the 'Three thousand ducats well!' These are the first words uttered by the picturesque personage to whom the splendid and elaborate scene, whose every detail we have previously been eagerly studying, becomes merely the background. He is wonderfully weird, but his weirdness is quite unlike that of any other of the impersonations in which Mr. Irving has accustomed us to that characteristic; it is impressive, never fantastic,—sometimes solemn and terrible. There was a moment when, as he stood, in the last scene, with folded arms and bent head, the very image of exhaustion, a victim, entirely convinced of the justice of his cause, he looked like a Spanish painter's *Ecc Homo*. The likeness passed in an instant, for the next utterance is :

' My deeds upon my head. I crave the law,  
The penalty and forfeit of my bond.'

" In the opinion of the present writer, his Shylock is Mr. Irving's finest performance, and his final exit is its best point. The quiet shrug, the glance of ineffable, unfathomable contempt at the exulting booby Gratiano, who, having got hold of a good joke, worries it like a



puppy with a bone, the expression of defeat in every limb and feature, the deep, gasping sigh, as he passes slowly out, and the crowd rush from the Court to hoot and howl at him outside, make up an effort which must be seen to be comprehended. Perhaps some students of Shakespeare, reading the Jew's story to themselves, and coming to the conclusion that there was more sentiment than legality in that queer, confused, quibbling Court, where judge and advocate were convertible terms, may have doubted whether the utterer of the most eloquent and famous satirical appeal in all dramatic literature, whose scornful detestation of his Christian foes rose mountains high over what they held to be his ruling passion, drowning avarice fathom deep in hatred, would have gratified those enemies, by useless railing, and an exhibition of impotent rage. But there is no 'tradition' for this rendering, in which Mr. Irving puts in action for his Shylock one sense of Hamlet's words:— 'The rest is Silence.' The impression made by this consummate stroke of art and touch of nature upon the vast audience was most remarkable, and the thrill that passed over the house was a sensation to have witnessed and shared."

I have thought it better to quote the opinions of two representative literary journals rather than write my own impressions of a performance which was received with extraordinary unanimity of applause. Mr. Joseph Knight may be considered representative of those who have looked on Irving's impersonations of classical parts without enthusiasm, but he considered it his duty to say some kind things of the new Shylock. "The final exit of the Jew," he wrote, "is one of the most impressive things we can recall; the comedy passages



are introduced with full effect, and much melancholy dignity is assigned to Shylock. The entire performance is thoughtful and likely to raise Mr. Irving's reputation."

The revival of *The Merchant of Venice* proved a triumph for Ellen Terry as well as for Irving, and Mr. Johnson as Launcelot Gobbo, Miss Alma Murray as Jessica, and Mr. Barnes as Bassanio, played with taste and distinction. I give below the cast and synopsis of scenery of the first representation.

### THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.

<i>Shylock</i>	. . . . .	MR. IRVING.
<i>Duke of Venice</i>	. . . . .	MR. BEAUMONT.
<i>Prince of Morocco</i>	. . . . .	MR. TYARS.
<i>Antonio</i>	. . . . .	MR. FORRESTER.
<i>Bassanio</i>	. . . . .	MR. BARNES.
<i>Salanio</i>	. . . . .	MR. ELWOOD.
<i>Salarino</i>	. . . . .	MR. PINERO.
<i>Gratiano</i>	. . . . .	MR. F. COOPER.
<i>Lorenzo</i>	. . . . .	MR. N. FORBES.
<i>Tubal</i>	. . . . .	MR. J. CARTER.
<i>Launcelot Gobbo</i>	. . . . .	MR. S. JOHNSON.
<i>Old Gobbo</i>	. . . . .	MR. C. COOPER.
<i>Gaoler</i>	. . . . .	MR. HUDSON.
<i>Leonardo</i>	. . . . .	MR. BRANSCOMBE.
<i>Balthazar</i>	. . . . .	MR. TAPPING.
<i>Stephano</i>	. . . . .	MR. GANTHONY.
<i>Clerk of the Court</i>	. . . . .	MR. CALVERT.
<i>Nerissa</i>	. . . . .	MISS FLORENCE TERRY.
<i>Jessica</i>	. . . . .	MISS ALMA MURRAY.
<i>Portia</i>	. . . . .	MISS ELLEN TERRY.
Magnificos, Officers, Gentlemen and Gentlewomen, Pages, Citizens, Jews, etc.		

SCENE : *Partly in Venice and partly at Belmont.*

### SYNOPSIS OF SCENERY.

#### ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Venice : A Public Place.* SCENE II.—*Belmont : Portia's House.* SCENE III.—*Venice : A Public Place.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Street.* SCENE II.—*Another Street.* SCENE III.—*Shylock's House by a Bridge.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Belmont : A Room in Portia's House.* SCENE II.—*Venice : A Street.* SCENE III.—*Belmont : A Room in Portia's House.* SCENE IV.—*Venice : A Street.* SCENE V.—*A Room in Portia's House.*

ACT IV.

SCENE.—*Venice : A Court of Justice.*

ACT V.

SCENE.—*Belmont : Portia's Garden with Terrace.*

Shakespeare's play was at first preceded by a comédietta by Mr. Pinero, entitled *Daisy's Escape*, which was, I believe, the first effort of the dramatist to whom we owe *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* and *The Gay Lord Quex*. On the 20th of May, 1880, the last act of *The Merchant of Venice* was omitted, and a version of Henrik Herz's *King René's Daughter*, entitled *Iolanthe*, by W. G. Wills, was produced. The title-part was played by Miss Terry, and that of Count Tristan by Henry Irving. Shakespeare's play was acted two hundred and fifty consecutive times, a run then without precedent in the stage history of the classical drama.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE CUP, AND OTHER PLAYS

SEPTEMBER 1880—JULY 1881

THE autumn season of 1880 commenced on the 18th of September with a revival of Dion Boucicault's version of *The Corsican Brothers*, which was first produced at the Princess's Theatre by Charles Kean in 1850. Both Kean and Fechter distinguished themselves in their impersonations of Louis and Fabien dei Franchi. "In the lighter scenes of the two first acts of *The Corsican Brothers*, Kean," according to G. H. Lewes, "wanted the light and graceful ease of Fechter ; but in the more serious scenes, and throughout the third act, he surpassed the Frenchman with all the weight and intensity of a tragic actor in situations for which the comedian is unsuited. The deadly quiet of a strong nature nerved to a great catastrophe—the sombre, fatal, pitiless expression—could not have been more forcibly given than by Charles Kean in this act ; and in the duel there was a stealthy intensity in every look and movement, which gave a shuddering fascination to the scenes altogether missed by Fechter." Irving's representation of the dual rôle was marked by the merits of both of his predecessors, but to succeed in a showy part of this kind is surely less honourable than to give a new reading of such a character as

Shylock. In spite of the wonderful efforts made by the scenic artists and machinists to give to the supernatural side of the play its full effect, *The Corsican Brothers* was hardly so startling as one expected. Notwithstanding this, it was again revived in June 1891, with many alterations and improvements.

Irving's next production was of far greater artistic interest. The story of his negotiations with Lord Tennyson for a play from his pen will be found in the life of the poet by his son. In relation to the stage production of the play Tennyson, in the course of a conversation with the late William Allingham, said :

"I gave Irving my *Thomas à Becket*: he said it was magnificent, but it would cost him £3,000 to mount it: he couldn't afford the risk. If well put on the stage it would act for a time, and it would bring me credit (he said), but it wouldn't pay. He said, 'If you give me something short I'll do it.' So I wrote him a play in two acts, *The Cup*."

On the 4th of December, 1880, Mr. Knowles wrote to Tennyson: "Irving is in a great state of excitement, and he is most anxious that you should read over the play, not only to himself and Ellen Terry, but to all the company which is to enact it. . . . He would like it to be on next Thursday week, when Ellen Terry will be back in town and everything advanced enough to make such a reading of the greatest and most opportune value."

The reading took place, and the play and its author were enthusiastically received by the members of the Lyceum Company.

The idea of the piece, founded on Plutarch's story

came to Tennyson when reading the following paragraph in Lecky's *History of European Morals* :

"A powerful noble once solicited the hand of a Galatian lady named Camma, who, faithful to her husband, resisted all his entreaties. Resolved at any hazard to succeed, he caused her husband to be assassinated, and when she took refuge in the Temple of Diana and enrolled herself among the priestesses, he sent noble after noble to induce her to relent. After a time he ventured himself into her presence. She feigned willingness to yield, but told him it was first necessary to make a libation to the goddess. She appeared as a priestess before the altar, bearing in her hand a cup of wine which she had poisoned. She drank half of it herself, handed the remainder to her guilty lover, and when he had drained the cup to the dregs burst into a fierce thanksgiving that she had been permitted to avenge and was soon to rejoin her murdered husband."

Out of this story Tennyson did not by any means make a great play, nor even "a great little play," to use the phrase in which Miss Terry described it to the author ; indeed, *The Cup* is emphatically inferior to *Queen Mary* or *The Falcon*, to say nothing of *Becket*. "Irving," says Mr. William Archer in *English Dramatists of To-day*, "mounted the piece with a taste and lavishness positively unexampled. Each scene was a masterpiece in itself, but the supreme effort was the Temple of Artemis, in which the last act takes place. In the gloom of the background we saw the great Diana of the Ephesians—Artemis polymastos, the many-breasted mother—looking down upon the fore-court, with its double row of solid, richly-sculptured marble pillars,

and its roof of sandal-wood inlaid with gold. The air was heavy with incense, and the priestesses moved noiselessly among the sacred lamps. I doubt if a more elaborate and perfect stage picture of its kind has ever been seen, and if so certainly not in England. It almost seems as if stage-decoration could go no further."

It is to be feared that *The Cup* will be remembered for this scene rather than for the opportunities it afforded for great acting, though the verse was generally beautiful and sometimes of rare power. And yet Irving and Ellen Terry, as Synorix and Camma, acted superbly and looked unforgettably picturesque. The former has rarely delivered a long soliloquy better than the one ending the first act, which opens :

'Adulterous dog!' that red-faced rage at me;  
Then with one quick, short stab—eternal peace;  
So end all passions. Then what use in passions?  
To warm the cold bounds of our dying life  
And, lest we freeze in mortal apathy,  
Employ us, heat us, quicken us, help us, keep us  
From seeing all too near that urn, those ashes  
Which all must be.

The death scene likewise was finely conceived and executed with great restraint.

Under these circumstances it is somewhat curious that the late Laureate expressed himself as not altogether satisfied with Irving's realization of his creation. *The Cup* was not sufficiently long to form an evening's entertainment, and it was accordingly succeeded sometimes by *The Corsican Brothers* and sometimes by *The Belle's Stratagem*. The following are the cast and synopsis of the scenery of Tennyson's play :

## THE CUP.

*The Scene is laid in Galatia, a Province of Asia Minor.*

## GALATIANS :

<i>Synorix (an ex-Tetrarch)</i>	. . . . .	MR. IRVING.
<i>Sinnatus (a Tetrarch)</i>	. . . . .	MR. TERRISS.
<i>Attendant</i>	. . . . .	MR. HARWOOD.
<i>Boy</i>	. . . . .	MISS BROWN.
<i>Maid</i>	. . . . .	MISS HARWOOD.
<i>Phæbe</i>	. . . . .	MISS PAUNCEFORT.
<i>Camma</i>	{ <i>Wife of Sinnatus, and afterwards</i> <i>Priestess in the Temple of Artemis</i> }	MISS ELLEN TERRY.

Priestesses, Attendants in Temple, Citizens, Huntsmen, etc., etc.

## ROMANS :

<i>Antonius (a Roman General)</i>	. . . . .	MR. TYARS.
<i>Publius</i>	. . . . .	MR. HUDSON.
<i>Nobleman</i>	. . . . .	MR. MATTHISON.
<i>Herald</i>	. . . . .	MR. ARCHER.

Soldiers, etc., etc.

## ACT. I.

SCENE I.—*Distant View of a City of Galatia* . (Afternoon) . W. TELBIN.

SCENE II.—*A Room in the Tetrarch's House* . (Evening) . W. TELBIN.

SCENE III.—*Distant View of a City of Galatia* (Dawn) . W. TELBIN.

(Half a Year is supposed to elapse between the Acts.)

## ACT. II.

SCENE.—*Interior of the Temple of Artemis* . HAWES CRAVEN AND  
W. CUTHBERT.

The next event in the history of Irving's theatre is one of exceptional interest. When Edwin Booth re-visited London in 1881, it was universally recognized that he was a great actor, and from nobody did he receive a more hearty welcome than from Henry Irving. He opened at the Princess's Theatre with justifiably high hopes that he would achieve a financial as well



as an artistic success. His enterprise was, however, most unintelligently managed.

To begin with, the theatre, which at that time was given over to melodrama of the blood-and-thunder kind, was ill-chosen for the presentation of classical plays. No place could have been more inappropriate as the home of an actor who, so far from being "robust," was intellectual to the verge of coldness as well as ornate and polished to an extreme degree. The scenery provided for his season was miserable, and the company which supported him, although it contained some excellent players, was only too obviously a "scratch" company. Under these circumstances, while Booth won the enthusiastic approval of the judicious, he lost money. Irving at length came to his rescue with a proposal which was alike blessed to him that gave and to him that took. He suggested that Booth should come over to the Lyceum, and, in a magnificent revival of *Othello*, should alternate with him the title-part and that of Iago. The first performance took place on the 2nd of May, when Booth gave an imposing, if over-elocutionary, impersonation of the Moor, and Irving was seen for the first time as Iago. On all hands this was admitted to be a great performance; critics who hitherto spoke of Irving without enthusiasm willingly recognized the subtlety of this effort. Mr. Walkley describes Irving's Iago as "daringly Italian, a true compatriot of the Borgias, or rather better than Italian, that 'devil incarnate, an Englishman Italianate.' The remembrance of those grapes which he plucked and slowly ate still sets the teeth of Philistia on edge." Mr. William Archer, in his famous little pamphlet, *Henry Irving: Actor and Manager*, tells us: "In proportion as a character calls for intellect

rather than purely histrionic qualities in its interpreter—in proportion as it addresses itself to the intellect rather than the sympathy of the audience—in precisely the same proportion does Mr. Irving succeed in it. His Hamlet is better than his Macbeth or Othello, his Shylock than his Hamlet, his Richard than his Shylock ; while his Iago, who speaks from brain to brain, comes as near perfection as anything he has done."

Without endorsing every word of this, it is difficult to disagree with the last phrase. When it fell to Irving to resume the part of Othello, it was found that, inspired it may well be by the companionship of such players as Ellen Terry and Edwin Booth, his rendering had gained considerably in the passionate parts of it.

On the 23rd of July Irving and Miss Terry played Modus and Helen respectively in selected scenes from *The Hunchback*, a performance they have not since repeated.

On the 8th of November Irving delivered a lecture, entitled *The Stage as It Is*, at the Philosophical Institution, Edinburgh. In this address he appealed characteristically for the recognition of the dignity of the dramatic profession. "For myself," he said, "it kindles my heart with proud delight to think that I have stood to-day before this audience—known for its discrimination throughout all English-speaking lands a welcome and honoured guest, because I stand here for justice to the art to which I am devoted—because I stand here in thankfulness for the justice which has begun to be so abundantly rendered to it."

And he concluded with this eloquent peroration :

"And how perpetually sustaining the knowledge

that whatever may be the vicissitudes and even the degradations of the Stage, it must and will depend for its constant hold on the affection and attention of mankind upon its loftier work; upon its more penetrating passion; upon its themes which most deeply search out the strong affections and high hopes of men and women; upon its fit and kindling illustration of great and vivid lives, which either have been lived in noble fact or have deserved to endure immortality in the popular belief and admiration which they have secured.

‘For our eyes to see!  
Sons of wisdom, song, and power,  
Giving earth her richest dower,  
And making nations free—  
A glorious company!’

‘Call them from the dead  
For our eyes to see!  
Forms of beauty, love, and grace,  
“Sunshine in a shady place,”  
That made it life to be  
A blessed company!’”

## CHAPTER XX

### ROMEO AND BENEDICK

1882—1883

WHILE a brief revival of *Two Roses*, to which allusion has already been made, was going on, *Romeo and Juliet* was being rehearsed. If this book were chiefly concerned with Henry Irving's work as a stage-manager and *metteur-en-scène*, a great amount of space would of necessity have to be devoted to his superb production of Shakespeare's incomparable poem of youthful passion. He approached the play in his habitual spirit of reverence, carefully preparing the text by removing from it all excrescences and subjecting it to no unnecessary and capricious alterations. The late Earl of Lytton, in a speech made at a banquet in celebration of the one hundredth performance of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Lyceum, was right when he said, "Though *Romeo and Juliet* is one of the most poetic, it is certainly one of the least dramatic of Shakespeare's tragedies. To us its main charm and interest must always be poetic rather than dramatic. Even in the versification of it Shakespeare has adopted, as he has adopted in no other drama, forms peculiar to the early love poetry of Italy and Provence. Its true *dramatis personæ* are not mere mortal Montagues and Capulets, they are those beautiful immortals, love and youth, in

an ideal land of youth and love ; and those delicate embodiments of a passionate romance Shakespeare has surrounded with a scenery and invested with an atmosphere of sensuous beauty. This atmosphere is the only medium through which we can view them in their true poetic perspective, and right relation to that imaginary world in which alone they naturally breathe and move and have their being. But it is this subtle atmosphere of surrounding beauty which invariably and inevitably escapes in the ordinary stage performances of the play, and it is, I conceive, the surpassing merit of Mr. Irving's conception and treatment of the play to have restored to it, or rather to have given for the first time to its stage performance, the indefinable pervading charm of what I can only call its natural poetic climate."

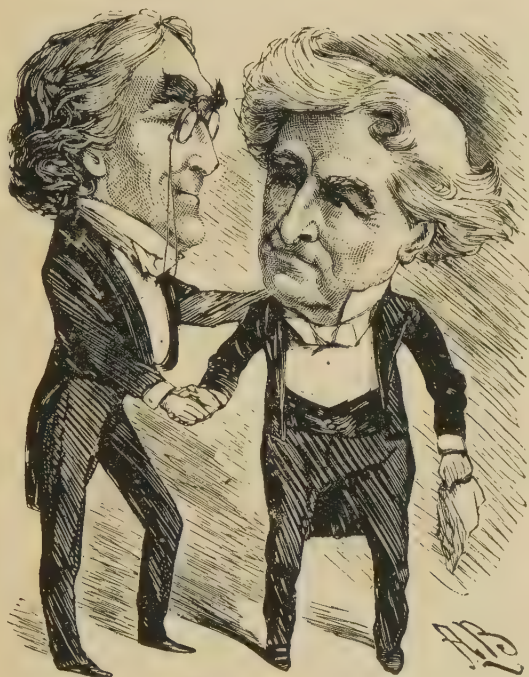
From such a man as "Owen Meredith"—poet, scholar, diplomatist—this was gratifying eulogy, and so far as it went Henry Irving deserved it to the full. The climate of *Romeo and Juliet* was found on the stage of the Lyceum as it had never been found on any stage before, but, to put it bluntly, the Romeo was an impossible Romeo. Irving was not feeble—he never is feeble, even when, as in this case, he attempts the impossible—but he was incongruous, even grotesque. His was a Romeo in whose love-making there was not a single moment of ecstasy—a creature even more unconvincing than a "Juliet without a jump." Where every atom of self-consciousness should have disappeared in the flood of passion, this Romeo was painfully ill-at-ease, restless, constrained. In the tragic moments Irving was better, but even then he was never at his best. The first performance of the play took place on the 8th of March, 1882, and the cast was as follows :

## ROMEO AND JULIET.

<i>Romeo</i> . . . . .	MR. HENRY IRVING.
<i>Mercutio</i> . . . . .	MR. WILLIAM TERRISS.
<i>Tybalt</i> . . . . .	MR. CHARLES GLENNY.
<i>Paris</i> . . . . .	MR. GEORGE ALEXANDER.
<i>Capulet</i> . . . . .	MR. HOWE.
<i>Montague</i> . . . . .	MR. HARBURY.
<i>Friar Laurence</i> . . . . .	MR. FERNANDEZ.
<i>Apothecary</i> . . . . .	MR. MEAD.
<i>Prince Escalus</i> . . . . .	MR. TYARS.
<i>Benvolio</i> . . . . .	MR. CHILD.
<i>Gregory</i> . . . . .	MR. CARTER.
<i>Sampson</i> . . . . .	MR. ARCHER.
<i>Abraham</i> . . . . .	MR. LOUTHER.
<i>Balthasar</i> . . . . .	MR. HUDSON.
<i>Peter</i> . . . . .	MR. ANDREWS.
<i>Friar John</i> . . . . .	MR. BLACK.
<i>Citizen</i> . . . . .	MR. HARWOOD.
<i>Chorus</i> . . . . .	MR. HOWARD RUSSELL.
<i>Page</i> . . . . .	MISS KATE BROWN.
<i>Nurse</i> . . . . .	MRS. STIRLING.
<i>Lady Montague</i> . . . . .	MISS H. MATTHEWS.
<i>Lady Capulet</i> . . . . .	MISS L. PAYNE.
<i>Juliet</i> . . . . .	MISS ELLEN TERRY.

From the point of view of acting, the one perfect performance was that of Mrs. Stirling as the Nurse. The late Mr. Henry Howe, who retained his powers in a green old age and who has graced so many Lyceum productions, was excellent as Capulet.

If one feels anxious, in the interests of Irving, to pass over *Romeo and Juliet* quickly, one is inclined to dwell at outrageous length over *Much Ado about Nothing*, which was the next of his great productions. Here criticism may take the generous form prescribed by Mr. Pinero, for it need be little but "Praise, Praise, Praise!" And it is a delightful business, this nodding approval to all and sundry! It makes one feel so



THE LATE MR. HENRY HOWE AND SIR HENRY IRVING.

(AN INCIDENT AT THE LAST DRAMATIC FUND DINNER)

CARTOON BY ALFRED BRYAN. FROM "THE ENTR'ACTE," MARCH 21ST, 1896.

satisfied with one's fellow-men, and, what is far more important, with oneself. If criticism consisted in



nothing else, surely all men of sound heart would become practitioners of the "superfluous craft."

The great surprise of the Lyceum revival lay in the fact that *Much Ado* was felt to be just as gay, just as gallant, as when it was written. The salt of its humour had lost none of its savour; to employ a word very frequently used in disreputable connections, it was "spicy." *Charley's Aunt* was not newer, though to all but a few it was a vast deal more satisfying. Apart from the "Entire Shakespearianism," I suppose most people will allow that the greatest of dramatic poets is not the best of modern acting dramatists, and yet when one saw *Much Ado about Nothing* at the Lyceum, one felt that Shakespeare, even from the relatively unimportant theatrical point of view, was really for all time. Not a little of this feeling was due to the incomparable interpretation which the parts of Beatrice and Benedick received at the hands of Ellen Terry and Henry Irving.

And again, *How*, another *old* which affords the interpreter a fine opportunity, was impersonated most gracefully and sympathetically by Miss Milward. In the church scene, which alike in splendour of conception and completeness of detail, was a worthy companion picture to the Temple of Artemis in *The Cup*, her assistance was specially valuable.

Irving's Benedick is perhaps his most successful effort in high comedy. Giving faultless expression to the sub-acid humour of the part, his bearing was nevertheless always that of a gallant gentleman rather than that of a mere private licensed buffoon. How strong in other respects the cast was may be judged from the following reprint of the play-bill:

*First Produced at the Lyceum Theatre, on the 11th of  
October, 1882.*

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

<i>Benedick</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	MR. HENRY IRVING.
<i>Don Pedro</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	MR. W. TERRISS.
<i>Don John</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	MR. C. GLENNY.
<i>Claudio</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	MR. FORBES-ROBERTSON.
<i>Leonato</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	MR. FERNANDEZ.
<i>Antonio</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	MR. H. HOWE.
<i>Balthazar</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	MR. J. ROBERTSON.
<i>Borachio</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	MR. F. TYARS.
<i>Conrade</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	MR. HUDSON.
<i>Friar Francis</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	MR. MEAD.
<i>Dogberry</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	MR. S. JOHNSON.
<i>Verges</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	MR. STANISLAUS CALHAEM.
<i>Seacoal</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	MR. ARCHER.
<i>Oatcake</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	MR. HARBURY.
<i>A Sexton</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	MR. CARTER.
<i>A Messenger</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	MR. HAVILAND.
<i>A Boy</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	MISS K. BROWN.
<i>Hero</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	MISS MILLWARD.
<i>Margaret</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	MISS HARWOOD.
<i>Ursula</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	MISS L. PAYNE.
<i>Beatrice</i>	.	.	.	.	.	.	MISS ELIEN TERRY.

Ladies, Gentlemen, Maskers, etc.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENERY.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Before Leonato's House.* SCENE II.—*Hall in Leonato's House.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Before Leonato's House.* SCENE II.—*Leonato's Garden (Evening).* SCENE III.—*Leonato's Garden (Morning).* SCENE IV.—*The Cedar Walk.* SCENE V.—*A Street.*

ACT III.

SCENE.—*Inside a Church.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Prison.* SCENE II.—*Leonato's Garden.* SCENE III.—*The Monument of Leonato.* SCENE IV.—*Hall in Leonato's House.*

Shakespeare's comedy was withdrawn, after a run of two hundred and twelve nights, in order to make way for a series of brief revivals of the principal items of the Lyceum *repertoire*, with a view to the American tour which was shortly to be undertaken. At a matinée on the 14th of June, 1883, in aid of the funds of the Royal College of Music, Irving gave a powerful rendering of his old part of Robert Macaire, thus proving afresh his mastery of one of the great *roles* of Frédéric Lemaître. The season concluded on the 28th of July with Irving's farewell benefit, when, amidst a scene of extraordinary enthusiasm, he delivered a speech which opened thus :

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.—I have often had to say 'Good-bye' to you on occasions like this, but never has the task been so difficult as it is to-night, for we are about to have a longer separation than we have ever had before. Soon an ocean will roll between us, and it will be a long, long time before we can hear your heart-stirring cheers again. It is some consolation, though, to think that we shall carry with us across the Atlantic the goodwill of many friends who are here to-night, as well as of many who are absent. Here, in this theatre, have we watched the growth of your great and generous sympathy with our work, which has been more than rewarded by the abundance of your regard, and you will believe me when I say I acutely feel this parting with those who have so steadily and staunchly sustained me in my career. Not for myself alone I speak, but on behalf of my comrades, and especially for Miss Ellen Terry. Her regret at parting with you is equal to mine. You will, I am sure, miss

her, as she will certainly miss you. But we have our return to look forward to, and it will be a great pride to us to come back with the stamp of the favour and goodwill of the American people, which, believe me we shall not fail to obtain."

Before Irving crossed the Atlantic he had to run the gauntlet of an orgy of farewell banquets. The most important of these was organized by a committee consisting of the late Lord Chief Justice (Lord Coleridge), the Earl of Fife, Sir F. Pollock, Sir F. Leighton, P.R.A., Sir J. Moncton, Sir E. Clarke, Q.C., M.P., Mr. Burdett-Coutts, Mr. W. Spottiswoode, P.R.S., Mr. J. L. Toole, and Mr. E. Pinches (hon. sec.). The banquet took place at St. James's Hall on the 4th of July, when Lord Coleridge made an eloquent speech in proposing Irving's health, which concluded :

"It does not become me—indeed, I have not the skill or power—to analyse critically Mr. Irving's genius, to weigh it in the balance of results, and to say that in this it exceeds or in that it is deficient. To me it is sufficient to be certain that he has an exceptional and unusual power of distinctly realizing to himself an intellectual conception of the part which he acts. He has the power of expressing to me and to others, and of making us comprehend what his own distinct intellectual conviction is, and that to me is most profoundly interesting. It does not become me, where some is good and so much more is more than good—is excellent—as an occasional play-goer, to pick out and praise this or that particular thing, but if I may be permitted to say in what, in my judgment, the genius of Mr. Irving has culminated, I should merely as a matter of personal opinion pick out the play scene in *Hamlet*, and the

intense malignity of the felon in *The Lyons Mail*. But I do not pretend to be a critic. All that I can say is, that I have found great delight in Mr. Irving, and that I have found great cause for wonder and admiration in the versatility of his powers. He not only plays good tragedy, but he plays good comedy and he plays good farce. It has been said—I know not with how much truth—of Garrick that he played in one and the same night *King Lear* and *Abel Drugger*. I do not know whether Mr. Irving ever played in one night *Hamlet* and *Alfred Jingle*, but I know that he has played both and played them well. I am content simply to admire, and I say that in these things Mr. Irving has shown himself to be a thorough and accomplished artist.

"In conclusion, let me say that as America sent Booth to us, so we send Irving to America, and as Irving and England received Booth with open arms, so I am convinced that great and generous country will receive our first-rate and admirable actor. At all events, we tell America that we send her one of our best—on this her birthday, as a birthday present—and that we send her a man to whom I may fitly and properly adapt the words of the great Roman orator spoken of his predecessor—I mean Mr. Irving's predecessor—*Summus artifex et, ut hercule, summi artium in republica tanquam in sacra optima*, which I may venture to translate roughly for the benefit of the one or two people here who do not understand Latin—that he is a consummate artist, and, by jove! capable of the best arts, both on the stage and off it."

On the 9th of July a professional supper of honour was given to Irving by Mr. Bancroft at the Garrick

Club, when all sorts and conditions of players were present. On the 11th of October Irving sailed from Liverpool for New York in the *Britannic*, his company, under the direction of Mr. Bram Stoker, having already preceded him.



IRVING BETWEEN ENGLAND AND AMERICA.

By Fred Barnard.



## CHAPTER XXI

### AMERICAN DAYS

IN a volume of scope so limited as the present it would be hopeless to attempt to deal with Henry Irving's American tours in anything like detail, but a few words respecting the first of them should find a place here. Irving, accompanied by Miss Terry, arrived in New York on the 21st of October, 1883. They were received by a small army of reporters, who treated them both to a most searching scrutiny. The morning after, Irving read the following very personal, but by no means unkindly, description of himself in one of the leading journals:

"Long grey hair, thrown carelessly back behind the ears, clean-shaven features remarkable for their delicate refinement, united with the suggestion of virile force, and a pair of eye-glasses perched on the rather aquiline nose, combined to remove any lingering doubt that it was Henry Irving, the greatest living English actor."

Irving submitted with good grace to the inevitable interviewers, upon whom he was so fortunate as to make an extremely favourable impression. He made his *début* at the Star Theatre as Mathias in *The Bells* on the 29th of October. In spite of the fact that the leading critics deplored his mannerisms, they praised him without stint and declared that his success was



of that emphatic kind which bears the stamp of unqualified popular approval. Of his feelings on that important evening he has given us his own impression :

“When first I stepped into view of the audience,” he said, “and saw and heard the great reception it gave me, I was filled with emotion. I felt it was a great epoch in my life. The moment I looked over the footlights at the people I knew we were friends. I knew they wanted to like me, expected something great, and would go away if I disappointed them, saying, ‘Well, we wanted to like him and can’t.’ Who could stand before such an audience on such an occasion and not be moved deeply?”

During this first engagement Irving, in addition to Mathias, played Charles I., Dubosc and Lesurques, Doricourt, Louis XI., and Shylock. His greatest successes were perhaps gained in the two last-named parts.

At Philadelphia Irving appeared for the first time in America as Hamlet, and his impersonation gave rise to much discussion. He was compared, as might be expected, with Edwin Booth, by no means generally to his disadvantage. All the Irving productions were praised for the evident care which had been bestowed on them.

“It is the completeness of them,” wrote one of the critics, “the sense of fitness, which charms ; they are resting as they are grateful to the sense, because they are true. The effort is not to dazzle, to impress, to electrify, but to show the thing itself, idealized to the proper point for stage effect—to make real through an atmosphere of poetry.”

And the same writer continues :

"Night after night hundreds of the same faces have been seen in the house, thus demonstrating that not Mr. Irving's fame nor their curiosity, but their interest and admiration, have drawn our citizens again and again to these performances. Whatever else Mr. Irving may or may not be, he is undoubtedly the most original actor that for very many years has set foot on our stage. In every character in which he has played his originality has been by far his most apparent quality."

The enthusiasm of Philadelphia was exceeded by that of Chicago, where the visit of the Lyceum company was a magnificent triumph. Amongst Irving's impersonations Shylock proved to be first favourite in the western city, where his performance of the part was contrasted perhaps too favourably with that of Booth.

"Booth's rendition brought tears of emotion to the eyes," said the *Tribune*; "Irving's utterance flashed across the brain in the splendour of its naturalness. Booth's cry 'I thank God; I thank God. Is it true? Is it true?' embodied one overmastering passion, Irving's the complex passions of the Hebrew's heart. The former was more melodramatic; the latter was, beyond all question, the more artistic. In a word, Booth recited, while Irving impersonated. Which of these schools of acting will be the school of the future? That question is one which the good taste of the English-speaking world has already answered."

On Irving's return visit to Chicago *Much Ado about Nothing* was given, when his Benedick was declared to be a "true, poetic, and lofty interpretation; it was

a light sketch of the poet richly coloured and completed ; it was the full-blown blossom of pure, romantic comedy."

Boston, the fastidious and refined, spoke in no uncertain tones of the actor's Hamlet, while Charles I. was a great favourite. The *Transcript* said that "in Mr. Irving's Charles I. one recognizes the man in whom, as Matthew Arnold might say, the instinct for beauty transfuses and informs the instinct for conduct. With the historical exactness of the character we have for the moment nothing to do ; we look upon it simply as a wonderfully well-rounded and incomparably well-realized dramatic conception."

This critic, however, conceived it his duty to lay stress on Irving's faults of elocution and gesture. Speaking of his Hamlet, he adds, however, "And yet, criticize as many faults as we may, let the reason be persuaded to the full, the heart still remains unconvinced that it was bad acting. In face of the constantly powerful impression it made upon us, the faults were impotent to lessen our admiration ; we were completely carried away, and for the moment were willing to accept them all. That this momentary silencing of the critical spirit was wholly due to the magnetic influence and charm of Mr. Irving's personality we cannot think. It was undoubtedly due also to a certain unwonted quality in the very faults themselves, which enabled them to bring their own pardon with them. Such is the innate dignity of the man that we cannot find them ludicrous. And withal, he has this great and rare merit, that whatever he says does not sound like a speech committed to memory beforehand. He always seems to be talking, and not declaiming. He made

Hamlet seem more of a convincing reality to us than ever before."

But after all, the most interesting of these American opinions is that of Edwin Booth. "Do you think," said an interviewer to the famous American player, "that Mr. Irving is as great an artist as our English cousins would have us believe?" "He is a thorough artist," was the generous reply; "and his earnestness, his scholarly taste, his intellectuality, are as plainly seen in his acting as his sense of the picturesque is shown in his stage settings. He is an actor of great natural ability and much polish; his mannerisms are marked, and at first distract your attention, particularly in his peculiarities of voice, but one soon becomes accustomed to them, and forgets them in the enjoyment of his admirable acting."

Irving took leave of the American public with gratitude and with repeated promises of a speedy return. "If all be well," he said, "we shall return next autumn, full of hopeful anticipation, and to our friends at home we shall say, 'We are returning for a parting embrace—a six months' embrace.' I am sure that our dear land, which has the first place in our hearts, will not begrudge us the affection we bear to America, which you, out of the depths of your kindness, have conjured up. . . . You have shown that upon the broad platform of a noble art the two greatest sections of the English-speaking race are one nation. You have shown that no jealous love of your own admirable actors has prevented you from recognizing the earnest purpose of an English company; and we shall return to our homes with the conviction that, new as our methods may have been, you have set the stamp of undisguised approval

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on them." Since then Henry Irving has appealed to the goodwill of the United States many times, and he must feel proud that the result has been invariably flattering to him. At the present moment American play-goers are eagerly awaiting his appearance in the most recent of the Lyceum productions, Sardou's *Robespierre*.

## CHAPTER XXII

### MALVOLIO AND MEPHISTOPHELES

JULY 1884—1886

A FIRST night at the Lyceum terminating with noisy evidences of discontent is so unusual that one is tempted to commence one's remarks on *Twelfth Night* with a few words as to the demonstration which took place when the curtain had fallen. The play was heard throughout with attention, sometimes with undisguised approval. Small wonder, then, that, when the pleasant words which Irving was prepared to address to the audience were interrupted by discordant voices, he was stung into retaliation. "I can't understand," he said, "how a company of earnest and admirable actors, having these three cardinal virtues of actors—being sober, clean, and perfect—and having exercised their abilities on one of the most difficult of plays, can have given any cause for dissatisfaction."

If a beautiful setting could have made *Twelfth Night* acceptable, the Lyceum revival afforded no reasonable ground of complaint; if an exquisite Viola was essentially no living actress could have done more to give it than Ellen Terry. As for the Malvolio of Henry Irving, was almost dangerously quaint. In Irving's hands the humour of the part lost not an iota of its subtlety. He has often been intentionally—and now and then unintentionally

ally—grotesque, but never more rightly and effectively so than when, in his long dressing-gown and night-cap, he disturbed the revellers in the famous scene in *Twelfth Night*. His impersonation called forth the statement from Mr. Joseph Knight that “Mr. Irving may probably claim to be the best Malvolio the Stage has seen.” This critic specially praises the actor’s avoidance of the coarser forms of buffoonery with which low comedians had invested the part.

The play settled down at length into a moderate success, but it does not rank among the great popular triumphs of Irving’s management. The story of *Twelfth Night* is thin, its dramatic interest is of the slightest, its charm lying in its airy fancy and poetic invention. It is not wonderful, therefore, that it is caviare to the general. It was first produced at the Lyceum on the 8th of July, 1884, with the following cast :

# TWELFTH NIGHT; OR, WHAT YOU WILL.

<i>Malvolio</i>	MR. HENRY IRVING.
<i>The Duke Orsino</i>	MR. TERRISS.
<i>Sir Toby Belch</i>	MR. DAVID FISHER.
<i>Sir Andrew Aguecheek</i>	MR. FRANCIS WYATT.
<i>Fabian</i>	MR. ANDREWS.
<i>Clown</i>	MR. S. CALHAEM.
<i>Sebastian</i>	MR. FRED TERRY.
<i>Antonio</i>	MR. H. HOWE.
<i>A Sea Captain</i>	MR. TYARS.
<i>Valentine</i>	MR. HAVILAND.
<i>Curio</i>	MR. MELLISH.
<i>A Friar</i>	MR. HARBURY.
<i>First Officer</i>	MR. ARCHER.
<i>Second Officer</i>	MR. HARWOOD.
<i>Olivia</i>	MISS ROSE LECLERCQ
<i>Maria</i>	MISS L. PAYNE.
<i>Viola</i>	MISS ELLEN TERRY

Lords, Ladies, Officers, Musicians, etc.

SCENE : *A City in Illyria and the Sea-coast near it.*



While on the second American tour, Henry Irving was invited to address the students of the University of Harvard. He delivered his lecture on the 30th of March, 1885, choosing as his subject "The Art of Acting." He dealt with his matter under the following headings: (1) The Occasion, (2) The Art of Acting, (3) The Practice of the Art, and (4) The Rewards of the Art. The following passage is worth quoting, for it casts a light on, and is in some measure a defence of, his peculiarities of pronunciation:

"No less an authority than Cicero points out that pronunciation must vary widely according to the emotions to be expressed; that it may be broken or cut, with a varying or direct sound; and that it serves for the actor the purpose of colour to the painter—from which to draw his variations. Take the simplest illustration—the formal pronunciation of 'A-h' is 'Ah,' of 'O-h' is 'Oh'; but you cannot stercotype the expression of emotion like this. These exclamations are words of one syllable; but the speaker who is sounding the gamut of human feeling will not be restricted in his pronunciation by the dictionary rule. It is said of Edmund Kean that he never spoke such ejaculations, but always sighed or groaned them. Fancy an actor saying thus, 'My Desdemona! Oh, öh, öh!' Words are intended to express feelings and ideas, not to bind them in rigid fetters. The accents of pleasure are different from the accents of pain; and if a feeling is more accurately expressed, as in nature, by a variation of sound not provided for by the laws of pronunciation, then such imperfect laws must be disregarded and nature vindicated. The word should be the echo of the sense."

The next important Lyceum production was the revival of Mr. Wills's delightful play, *Olivia*, founded, as all the world knows, on *The Vicar of Wakefield*. Originally performed at the Court Theatre on the 30th of March, 1878, this piece was memorable from the fact that it provided Miss Terry with a part by her performance of which she was at once recognized as one of the leading emotional actresses of the day. I place the casts of the original production, and of the Lyceum revival on the 28th of May, 1885, side by side for the purpose of comparison :

## OLIVIA.

	<i>Court, 1878.</i>	<i>Lyceum, 1885.</i>
<i>Dr. Primrose</i> . . .	MR. HERMANN VEZIN .	MR. IRVING.
<i>Moses</i> . . .	MR. NORMAN FORBES .	MR. NORMAN FORBES.
<i>Squire Thornhill</i> . .	MR. W. TERRISS .	MR. W. TERRISS.
<i>Mr. Burchell</i> . . .	MR. F. ARCHER .	MR. WENMAN.
<i>Leigh</i> . . .	MR. DENISON .	MR. TYARS.
<i>Farmer Flamborough</i>	MR. R. CATHCART .	MR. H. HOWE.
<i>Polly Flamborough</i> .	MISS M. CATHCART .	MISS COLERIDGE.
<i>Phæbe</i> . . .	MISS K. NICHOLLS .	MISS MILLS.
<i>Gipsy Woman</i> . . .	MISS NEVILLE .	MISS BARNETT.
<i>Mrs. Primrose</i> . . .	MRS. GASTON MURRAY.	MISS L. PAYNE.
<i>Dick</i> . . .	MISS L. NEVILLE .	MISS F. HOLLAND.
<i>Bill</i> . . .	MISS KATE NEVILLE .	MISS M. HOLLAND.
<i>Sophia</i> . . .	MISS KATE AUBREY .	MISS WINIFRED EMERY.
<i>Olivia</i> . . .	MISS ELLEN TERRY .	MISS ELLEN TERRY.

The Dr. Primrose of Mr. Hermann Vezin had been a fine performance, and curiosity was naturally felt as to what an actor of temperament and method so different as Henry Irving would make of the part. Comparisons are proverbially odious, but in this case neither of these actors need fear them. Each was excellent, although there was little ground of likeness between

the one and the other. Irving made of Dr. Primrose a figure infinitely pathetic, simple as a trusting child, but with too much innate dignity ever to appear ludicrous. Of his impersonations, this is perhaps one of those least disfigured by affectation or eccentricity.

According to Mr. Clement Scott, the finest moment of Irving's acting was "in the scene where the Vicar comes to rescue his daughter. For a moment, troubled and travel-stained as he is, he breaks away from her and remembers that he has a duty to perform. He loves the child surpassingly well, but he is her father, and she has erred. He has to summon up all his courage for a homily on her lost sense of duty. He nerves himself for what he conceives to be necessary, and begins, with tears starting in his eyes, to tell Olivia of her grievous fault. But the old man breaks down over the effort of forced calm; the strain is too much for him; all at once he melts, he casts aside the manner of the priest, and, calling Olivia to his arms, becomes her loving father once more. The effect of this was instantaneous. The house was astonished and delighted. As regards acting, it was a moment of true inspiration, a masterpiece of invention."

To an actor who had given numerous victorious proofs of his sardonic power, the part of Mephistopheles was obviously almost irresistibly attractive, and the announcement that Irving had resolved on the production, on a magnificent scale, of a version of Goethe's *Faust* came with little surprise to those who had followed his career.

By many of Irving's admirers, every whit as sincere as myself, I am aware that the *Faust* production is regarded as the crowning triumph of his management.

Certain it is that he never took greater pains, and that he was never more richly rewarded by the solid return of popular applause and general support. But to me it was one of the least artistic of Irving's experiments: it was a noble effort, strenuously made, but it resulted in failure, albeit magnificent failure.

The *Faust* of the Lyceum seemed to me to be no more the real thing than the *Faust* of Gounod's opera. For once Mr. Wills played his actor false; for once the mechanist and scene-painter overwhelmed a mock masterpiece. Such coming and going of demons, such alarm of lurid illumination, were assuredly never before seen on any stage; but amidst it all one never felt anything of the philosophy or the passion of this immortal legend to which Marlowe and Goethe paid homage. There were moments in Henry Irving's impersonation of the Prince of Darkness which might well convince the least kindly of his critics that he was an actor of genius, but there were others in which he came dangerously near to the exaggerated infamy of the king of terrors of the annual Christmas pantomime. He was perhaps seen at his best in the passages with Martha. The delivery of the famous lines—

Where will she go to by and by,  
I wonder? *I won't have her!*—

called forth a shuddering laugh which is not easily forgotten. With equal effect also he whispered in Margaret's ear the words:

Hast thou not killed thy mother?  
Scruple not to kill thy babe.

Without further comment on an impersonation with which I felt, and still feel, little sympathy, I reproduce the play-bill of the first performance:

December 19th, 1885.

## FAUST.

## MORTALS :

<i>Faust</i> . . . . .	MR. CONWAY.
<i>Valentine</i> . . . . .	MR. ALEXANDER.
<i>Frosch</i> . . . . .	MR. HARBURY.
<i>A. Schmeiser</i> . . . . .	MR. HAVLAND.
<i>Brander</i> . . . . .	MR. F. TYARS.
<i>Simon</i> . . . . .	MR. JOHNSON.
<i>Student</i> . . . . .	MR. NORMAN FORBES.
<i>Burgomaster</i> . . . . .	MR. H. HOWE.
<i>Chorus</i> . . . . .	MR. HELMSLEY.
	MR. LOUTHER.
<i>Soldier</i> . . . . .	MR. M. HARVEY.
<i>Martha</i> . . . . .	MRS. STIRLING.
<i>Bessy</i> . . . . .	MISS L. PAYNE.
<i>Ida</i> . . . . .	MISS BARNETT.
<i>Anna</i> . . . . .	MISS COLBERT.
<i>Catherine</i> . . . . .	MISS MILLS.
<i>Margaret</i> . . . . .	MISS ELLEN FERRY.

## SPIRITS :

<i>Mephistopheles</i> . . . . .	MR. HENRY IRVING.
	MR. MEAD.
<i>Witches</i> . . . . .	MR. CARTER.
	MR. ARCHER.
	MR. CLIFFORD.

Soldiers, Students, etc.

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENERY.

## ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Faust's Study* (W. Telbin). SCENE II.—*The Witches' Kitchen* (Hawes Craven). SCENE III.—*Nuremberg* (St. James-Place) (W. Telbin).

## ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Margaret's Chamber* (Hawes Craven). SCENE II.—*The City Wall* (Hawes Craven). SCENE III.—*Martha's House* (Hawes Craven). SCENE IV.—*Margaret's Garden* (Hawes Craven). SCENE V.—*Town and Mountains* (W. Telbin). SCENE VI.—*Margaret's Garden* (Hawes Craven).

## ACT III.

SCENE.—*Street by Church* (Hawes Craven).

## ACT IV.

SCENE.—*Summit of the Brocken* (W. Telbin).

## ACT V.

SCENE.—*Dungeon* (W. Telbin).

As will be seen from this summary, the whole of the marvellous scenery for this production came from the brushes of two artists and their respective assistants. I am doubtful as to whether, after all, these scenic artists were not entitled to the greatest credit in a production which is memorable, chiefly by reason of its enormous popularity, in the annals of the Lyceum.

The production led to the publication of innumerable cheap editions of Goethe's work. If these were bought and read, Irving's experiment indirectly served a valuable purpose.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### CONCERNING DIVERS THINGS

1886—1888

IT was the ancient University of Dublin which, as we have already seen, was the first to give Henry Irving official signs of its approval. In 1886, Oxford, under the spell of Jowett, condescended to approve the actor by inviting him to lecture there. The story of Irving's now famous visit was told in *Truth* in characteristic style :

“The Master of Balliol is not the kind of man to be daunted by a temporary rebuff. For the moment the Sheldonian Theatre might be refused to the actor by the authorities ; but the New Schools in the High were open to the Vice-Chancellor, and thither he escorted Irving the actor with flourish of trumpets. Never was a thing so successfully managed ; never was triumph more complete. Two Liberals and Gladstonites, Lord and Lady Dalhousie, were invited to stay at Balliol with the Master to meet Irving. A Gladstonite bishop, Boyd Carpenter, of Ripon, was asked to preach the sermon that ushered the Commemoration, and to join the party at the Master's house. The Bishop, who was to preach on Moses at St. Mary's, was regaled with anecdotes of Betterton, Garrick, and Kean over-night. The ladies ogled the celebrated actor, implored him for his auto-



graph, and flung their birthday-books at his feet. The Oxford boys—amateurs, athletes, and all—cheered him to the echo, and presented him with illuminated vellum and bound copies of Shakespeare. But the last triumph of the evening was reserved for the keen-witted and perceptive Jowett. He had inveigled to the New Schools at Oxford all the avowed enemies of the dramatic scheme and the new-fangled artistic hero-worship. The Dean of Christ-Church and Mrs. Liddell condescended to come. Grave proctors took the chairs by the side of the Vice-Chancellor, who, directly the lecture was over, surprised every one by getting up and supplementing it with a discourse of his own. He was determined to have his say about the Drama, and he had it. There was no getting out of it. They might refuse Irving his degree and his gown, but Jowett's defence of the Drama was inevitable. This done, the Master of Balliol scored point over point, over which he must have slyly chuckled. Fancy the fun of marching from Balliol to St. Mary's on Sunday morning, preceded by the grave gentlemen with the silver pokers, and accompanied by a bishop with a sermon under his arm and an actor with a lecture in his pocket!"

Irving delivered an address on this occasion which proved that he was an astute man of the world. He did not indulge in his usual, and often extravagant, plea for the dignity of his art, but he told the story of four great actors in words at once witty and wise. Jowett must have been quite satisfied with the eloquence of his guest, who, in the matter of dignity, left nothing to be desired.

About this time there arose the famous discussion between Irving and Coquelin on the theory of the art

of acting, which, though carried through on either side with considerable heat, has at length most happily resulted in the closest of friendships. The story has been so well told by Mr. Percy Fitzgerald in his book on Irving that I venture to quote the following account from his pages :

" In 1886, Coquelin, during a supper at Mrs. Macay's, was invited in a very flattering way by the Prince of Wales to play in London under Mr. Mayer. At this time, in obedience to the very natural 'form and pressure' of gain which was beginning to dissolve the great company of the French Comedy, he had begun to 'star it,' as it is called, in the various capitals of Europe, and, having found himself appreciated in London at private houses as well as on the stage, he seems to have nourished a feeling that he was contending for the suffrages of the public with the English actor! . . . An early token of this curious feeling was offered in an article published in *Harper's Magazine* in May 1887, where the French actor discussed with some acuteness the different systems of acting in England and in France, particularly in the matter of what is called natural or materialistic acting. He dwelt on the question how far the gifts of the comedian will enable him to exhibit tragic characters, contending that the practice of minute observation would materially aid him."

Mr. Fitzgerald then gives the following conversation between M. Coquelin and the Paris correspondent of an English newspaper :

" 'Certainly I differ from Mr. Irving,' replied M. Coquelin ; 'but is it not perfectly allowable for two actors to disagree on certain points of their art? Is it not perfectly natural that two artists should discuss

with animation that which is their chief care, their joy, their very life and soul? My only regret is that I have been unable to talk over these points with him personally; but all the efforts that have been made by common friends to bring us together have hitherto been sterilized by Mr. Irving, who, in the most graceful and charming manner in the world, has always managed to avoid meeting me. I ardently desire to meet him, all the more so because we differ. You understand perfectly well that, so far as I am concerned, there is no question of persons in this polemic, if polemic there be; there is question only of art, of processes, of manners, of conception. Mr. Irving refers to the great masters in painting. On that ground I am prepared to follow him, to carry out the analogy, and to note the distances which separate Velasquez, Titian, Rembrandt, and Raphael. We actors, too, are creators in a way. So in many points concerning our art I differ from Mr. Irving, whom I admire profoundly as an artist in spite of these differences. I have seen him act in a way which has profoundly thrilled me; I applaud the high and deserved respect in which he is held by the English; I deeply respect him myself. But when it comes to the theory and practice of our art, I demand permission to differ and to discuss, because the discussion is of vital interest to both of us and to all of our profession, and it is not indifferent to the public. Mr. Irving's article in *The Nineteenth Century* interested me very much, and suggested many ideas which I shall hope to develop some day when I can find time. I shall answer Mr. Irving, and my hope and desire is that Mr. Irving will reply to my answer. So, you see, there is no question of polemic, no question of

persons ; it is a courteous discussion between two artists.' ”

At length, however, personalities, though not intentionally offensive, apparently became inevitable, for we find M. Coquelin saying :

“ I cannot admit that Charles I. should be made to walk and talk like Mathias in *The Bells*, like Hamlet, and like Iago. Mr. Irving, I observe, is sometimes negligent in this matter ; but still, he sometimes conforms. He changes his voice for Louis XI., for instance. This being so, I fail to comprehend why he plays Mephistopheles with the voice of Romeo.”

Then we find Irving declaring that “ realistic portraiture, so important in the comic drama, occupies a comparatively minor place in tragedy, and that those who are skilful in such portraiture may be perfectly incapable of rising to the heights of the poetic drama.”

M. Coquelin evidently thought that this sentence was specially directed at him, for he replies that it “ must have been passed in a moment of that divine inspiration which Mr. Irving makes out to be the privilege of superior artists ; for he dispenses with mentioning human reasons in support of his verdict. It becomes me therefore,” he continues, “ to bow my head. . . . I do not regret that I have preached above everything the study of truth—of that truth which reveals to us the human heart, of that truth which is, after all, the eternal basis of Art, inasmuch as beauty is nothing but the splendour of it.”

It is entirely agreeable to think that this lively discussion should have ended, as I have already stated, in mutual friendship and respect.

On the 1st of June, 1887, a performance of exceptional

interest took place on the stage of the Lyceum. This was a revival of Lord Byron's play of *Werner* for the benefit of Dr. Westland Marston, the author of a good many dramas of more than ordinary merit. In his volume, *Some Recollections of Our Recent Actors*, Dr. Marston alludes in the following terms to the performance :

"Mr. Macready was succeeded in his great performance of *Werner* by Mr. Phelps, who played the character with considerable effect during his management of Sadler's Wells. Since then *Werner* remained unrepresented by any adequate actor until it was revived by Mr. Henry Irving for the benefit of the present writer, with a sympathetic generosity that has scarcely a parallel in theatrical annals."

*Werner* is as dull a play as ever came from the pen of a great writer. In the title-part, Irving, if he failed to make old play-goers forget Macready and Phelps, was very impressive. He has seldom looked more picturesque, and he delivered Byron's verse admirably. The cast was a very strong one :

# WERNER.

<i>Werner</i> . . . . .	MR. HENRY IRVING.
<i>Ulric</i> . . . . .	MR. GEORGE ALEXANDER.
<i>Gabor</i> . . . . .	MR. T. WENMAN.
<i>Stralenheim</i> . . . . .	MR. C. GLENNY.
<i>Idenstein</i> . . . . .	MR. HOWE.
<i>Rodolph</i> . . . . .	MR. HAVILAND.
<i>Fritz</i> . . . . .	MR. J. CARTER.
<i>Henrick</i> . . . . .	MR. ARCHER.
<i>Eric</i> . . . . .	MR. CALVERT.
<i>Arnheim</i> . . . . .	MR. CLIFFORD.
<i>Ludwig</i> . . . . .	MR. HARVEY.
<i>Josephine</i> . . . . .	MISS ELLEN TERRY,
	(For this occasion only.)
<i>Ida Stralenheim</i> . . . . .	MISS EMERY.

Although *Werner* was not intended for a run, it was staged in the most elaborate fashion, the costumes being specially designed by Mr. Seymour Lucas, R.A.

On the 23rd of May, 1888, Irving reappeared as Robert Macaire. On this occasion the part of Jacques Strop was played by Mr. Weedon Grossmith. It has always seemed to me regrettable that Irving has not used the version of *Robert Macaire* which we owe to Robert Louis Stevenson and William Ernest Henley, which, besides being a good acting play, is literature. The evening bill at the Lyceum included, besides *Robert Macaire*, Mr. Calmour's play, *The Amber Heart*, which afforded Miss Terry the opportunity of one of the most exquisite of her impersonations.

Before I conclude this chapter I may remind my readers that much light is thrown on Irving's method of presenting Shakespeare's plays by the perusal of the edition of the poet's works which bears his name. In each play the actor indicates what he considers essential, and what not essential, for the purpose of dramatic representation.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE MACBETH REVIVAL TO RAVENSWOOD

DECEMBER 1888—SEPTEMBER 1890

THE most interesting feature of the revival of *Macbeth*, on the 27th of December, 1888, was perhaps the entirely unconventional rendering of Lady Macbeth by Miss Terry. It was found that Irving, though he had greatly strengthened it, had not materially altered his embodiment of the Thane of Cawdor. Enormous pains were spent over the staging of the tragedy, with the result that one was presented with a series of marvellous pictures of Scottish scenery and of mediæval castles and halls which came near to producing a sense of absolute illusion. At the end of the highly successful run of *Macbeth*, Irving and Ellen Terry visited several of the larger provincial towns, where they gave readings of the tragedy.

The next production at the Lyceum was a revival of *The Dead Heart*, a play by Watts Phillips, which was first acted at the Adelphi when Ben Webster controlled the destinies of that theatre. The piece is melodrama of the most violent type, and, while it is possessed of no literary merit whatsoever, it is not without stirring situations which an actor doubtless finds very much to his taste. Before its revival at the Lyceum, the text was revised and to some extent re-written by



Mr. Walter H. Pollock, and M. Georges Jacobi composed a special overture and new incidental music for it. Elaborate scenery was prepared by Mr. Hawes Craven, Mr. Telbin, and Mr. Harker, while Mrs. Comyns Carr, Mr. Joseph Grego, and Mr. W. H. Margetson spent long days in devising costumes which should be at once accurate and beautiful. Not all the efforts of these clever people, even when added to the brilliant stage management of Henry Irving, availed to make the revival of *The Dead Heart* a notable or worthy incident in the history of what, for the last quarter of a century has been the leading English theatre. It seems to me unfortunate that Watts Phillips's rough and crude play should have occupied the stage of the Lyceum month after month. What was good enough for the Adelphi over thirty years ago is not, I venture to think, good enough for the Lyceum to-day.

When the play was originally produced, Benjamin Webster was seen as Robert Landry, David Fisher as the Abbé Latour, Miss Woolgar as Catherine Duval, and Miss Kate Kelly as Cerisette. At the Lyceum, there can be little doubt that these parts were better filled by Henry Irving, S. B. Bancroft, Ellen Terry, and Kate Phillips. The rôle of Landry gave Irving fine opportunities, of which he was not slow to make the most. His performance was exceedingly picturesque, and from the point of view of variety it left nothing to be desired. Mr. Clement Scott sums up its most remarkable points as follows :

"Mr. Irving has already had two fine opportunities both greedily seized—the one when the distraught and half-witted imbecile is rescued from prison, and breaks through the mist of terror to the day-dawn of reason ;

the other when Landry, accosted by his idolized Catherine, stands motionless, statue-like, and nerveless in her presence. No touch of hers can heighten



CARICATURE OF BANCROFT AS THE ABBÉ LATOUR, BY ALFRED BRYAN.  
FROM "THE ILLUSTRATED SPORTING AND DRAMATIC NEWS."

his pulse. The man is there, but his heart is dead. Mr. Irving, with singular skill, has touched the key-note of the story."

Alluding to the duel between Landry and the Abbé, Mr. Scott continues :

"It is a splendid fight—craft and recklessness on the one side, determination and vengeance on the other. The pale, calm face of Landry is opposed to the shifty, treacherous countenance of the Abbé. They fight, and the Abbé falls. He dies with a secret on his lips, grovelling at the feet of his relentless adversary. 'That man attempted my life, and I killed him. Remove the body of the citizen Latour!' So says the citizen Landry to the attendant soldiers, and the curtain falls! The situation is one of thrilling excitement, and the acting is admirable throughout. Mr. Bancroft is no longer Tartuffe, but Triplet. He is a new man. He jauntily carols in his prison monarchical songs, and enters Landry's presence with a pathetic air of defiance. The duel has been well studied. Mr. Irving's pale, determined features were in superb contrast to the weak 'Gribble,' with his lank grey hair. So effective, indeed, was the scene, that the curtain fell on genuine enthusiasm, and the brother actors were called three times."

The noisy play ends with an incident precisely similar to that which terminates *A Tale of Two Cities*. The sacrifice is the same as that sublime sacrifice made by Sidney Carton. Irving rose to the full height of a terribly pathetic situation, and *The Dead Heart* ends in a scene to which fine acting lends not a little of the dignity of tragedy. It will be remembered that it was in this play, as Arthur de St. Valery, that Mr. Gordon Craig made a most promising first appearance. The following is the cast and synopsis of scenery :

# MACBETH REVIVAL TO RAVENSWOOD 227

## THE DEAD HEART.

*First Produced at the Lyceum Theatre on the 28th of September, 1889.*

<i>Robert Landry</i>	MR. HENRY IRVING.
<i>The Abbé Latour</i>	MR. BANCROFT.
<i>The Count de St. Valery</i>	MR. HAVILAND.
<i>Arthur de St. Valery (his son)</i>	MR. GORDON CRAIG.
	(His first appearance on the Stage.)
<i>Legrand</i>	MR. ARTHUR STIRLING.
<i>Toupet</i>	MR. EDWARD RIGHTON.
<i>Reboul</i>	MR. F. TYARS.
<i>Michel</i>	MR. CLIFFORD.
<i>Jean</i>	MR. HARVEY.
<i>Pierre</i>	MR. TAYLOR.
<i>Jocrisse</i>	MR. ARCHER.
<i>Guiscard</i>	MR. BLACK.
<i>A Smith</i>	MR. RAYNOR.
<i>A Crier</i>	MR. DAVIS.
<i>A Woman</i>	MRS. CARTER.
<i>Cerisette</i>	MISS KATE PHILLIPS.
<i>Rose</i>	MISS COLERIDGE.
<i>Catherine Duval</i>	MISS ELLEN TERRY.

Aristocrats, People, Soldiers, Gendarmes, Gaolers, etc.

SCENE: *Paris.*

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENERY.

### PROLOGUE.—1771.

SCENE I.—*The Garden of the Café de la Belle Jardinière.* SCENE II.—*A Street.* SCENE III.—*Bedchamber of Catherine Duval.*

### ACT I.—1789.

SCENE I.—*The Bastille. Tableau Curtain.* SCENE II.—*Apartment in the Hôtel St. Valery. Tableau Curtain.* SCENE III.—*The Café Jocrisse.*

### ACT II.—1794.

SCENE I.—*Entrance to the Prison of the Conciergerie.* SCENE II.—*Corridor in the Prison.* SCENE III.—*Room in the Prison.*

### ACT III.—1794.

SCENE I.—*The Guillotine.* SCENE II.—*Room in the Prison.*

When it was known that Mr. Herman Merivale was dramatizing Scott's *Bride of Lammermoor* for Irving the judicious were much interested, for Mr. Merivale was a man of whom they had great expectations. He had written, under the title of *The White Pilgrim*, one of the best English poetical plays of modern times. Then from his pen came the fine romantic play *Alfred the Great*, for *Her*, with its subtly and effectively conceived hero Hugh Trevor; while some time later *Forget-me-Not* was produced by Miss Genevieve Ward, who, as Stephanie de Mohrivart, won the most conspicuous triumph of her brilliant career.

Although Mr. Merivale's *Ravenswood* was workmanlike enough, it scarcely fulfilled the high hopes that his friends had formed of it. *Ravenswood* himself was perhaps too constantly in evidence, and one would fain have seen more of Lucy Ashton, who, during the earlier scenes, was little more than a walking lady. It has been said that Irving cannot play a lover, and if this statement be limited to a youth absorbed in the ardours of a first and overwhelming passion, there is no doubt some truth in it. But though Edgar of *Ravenswood* was indeed a fervent lover, declaring passionately to Lucy Ashton—

Womanhood to me is foreign.

Save yourself!

he is something more than a lover: his very love involves his doom; from the outset he is under the imminent hand of death.

Nobody will dispute that Henry Irving can play a man whose circumstances are thus tragic, whose fate is thus irrevocably sealed. It was doubtless this side

of the character of Ravenswood which tempted him to impersonate this sombre hero of Scott's imagination.



CARICATURE OF IRVING AS RAVENSWOOD, BY ALFRED BRYAN. FROM "THE ILLUSTRATED SPORTING AND DRAMATIC NEWS."

He did it finely enough; and if the irreverent were inclined to titter during the mad bull shooting

scene, it was because on the stage the incident was, and could hardly fail to be, ludicrous. What Scott did with dignity and effect in his novel it was not possible for Mr Merivale to do on the stage. The love scene with Lucy by the mermaiden's well was one of the very best of Irving's love scenes. He conveyed very powerfully the sense of ill-defined dread which, owing to the warning of Ailsie Gourlay, overcasts his spirit and tinges his tenderness with melancholy. But his supreme moment was when he returned to face the faithless bride of Lammermoor. Here he played a trite and over-familiar stage situation in the most wonderfully convincing and original fashion. As one of the critics said, "He was a man, a Ravenswood, not an actor."

As will be seen by the following complete reproduction of the play-bill, great pains were taken properly to stage and adequately to mount the new version of *The Bride of Lammermoor*:

*This Evening, September 20th, 1890, will be presented*

## RAVENSWOOD,

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS,

BY

HERMAN MERIVALE,

From the Story of *The Bride of Lammermoor*,

*Overture at Eight o'clock.*

<i>Edgar (the Master of Ravenswood)</i>	. . .	MR. IRVING.
<i>Hayston of Bucklaw</i>	. . .	MR. TERRISS.
<i>Caleb Balderstone</i>	. . .	MR. MACKINTOSH.
<i>Craigengelt</i>	. . .	MR. WENMAN.
<i>Sir William Ashton</i>	. . .	MR. ALFRED BISHOP.
<i>The Marquis of Athole</i>	. . .	MR. MACKLIN.



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<i>Bide-the-Bent</i>	Mr. H. HOWE.
<i>Henry Ashton</i>	MR. GORDON CRAIG,
<i>Moncrieff (an officer)</i>	MR. TYARS.
<i>Thornton</i>	MR. HAVILAND,
<i>A Priest</i>	MR. LACY.
<i>Lockhard</i>	MR. DAVIS.
<i>Lady Ashton</i>	MISS LE THIÈRE.
<i>Ailsie Gourlay</i>	MISS MARRIOTT.
<i>Annie Winnie</i>	MRS. PAUNCEFORT.
<i>Lucy Ashton</i>	MISS ELLEN TERRY.

Friends, Soldiers, Retainers, etc.

PERIOD: *The Reign of Queen Anne.*

## ACT I.

SCENE.—*The Chapel Bounds* (Hawes Craven).

## ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Ravenswood: the Library* (J. Harker). SCENE II.—*Tod's Den* (Hawes Craven). SCENE III.—*The Wolf's Crag* (Hawes Craven).

## ACT III.

SCENE.—*The Mermaid's Well* (Hawes Craven).

Art interval of one year.

## ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Ravenswood: a Room* (J. Harker).

## BRIDAL SONG.

Welcome, bride of Lammermoor!  
 While the world in sleep reposes,  
 And the kiss of evening closes  
 One by one the graceful roses,  
 Show thyself, to vie with them!  
 Every little flower is wearing  
 Wedding favours, and preparing  
 Diamond dewdrops fit for wearing  
 In a marriage diadem.  
 Jewels meet for maiden pure;  
 Welcome, bride of Lammermoor!

SCENE II.—*The Sea-coast* (Hawes Craven). SCENE III.—*The same* (Hawes Craven). SCENE IV.—*The Kelpie's Flow* (Hawes Craven).

The Overture, Preludes, and Incidental Music composed expressly by Dr. A. C. MACKENZIE.

## CHAPTER XXV

### HENRY VIII. AND KING LEAR

1892

*HENRY VIII.*, as presented at the Lyceum, was a pageant rather than a play. It appealed to the eye and the ear most victoriously, but to the dramatic instinct it appealed scarcely at all. If *Henry VIII.* was to be revived, there can be little doubt that Irving went about the business in the right way. The play in its own time had a topical significance which it has long since lost. For the then spectators the events with which it dealt were, of course, matters of immediate significance, and its authors no doubt wrote it with a view to tickling the ears of Elizabethan groundlings, and never contemplated that, because Shakespeare had a hand in writing *Henry VIII.*, it would inevitably come to be considered a work for all time. To us Victorians it is not a drama which is aided by elaborate spectacle, but a spectacle made more interesting by certain dramatic incidents. As a slight chronicle play, depending mainly on scenic adornment, it is the finest thing which Henry Irving has ever done. As an actor he deserves praise for a capable and intelligent rendering of the part of Wolsey ; as a stage manager he deserves absolute canonization for giving us a series of stage pictures the like of which

have never been seen at any European theatre. One after another there came before our eyes scenes bewildering in completeness and beauty. There were the palace at Bridewell, the street outside the palace, the council chamber in the palace, the hall in York Place, the King's stairs at Westminster, the hall in Blackfriars, the apartments of the Queen, the miraculously realistic street in Westminster, the vision-haunted chamber at Kimbolton, and finally the wonderful interior of the church of the Grey Friars. The profuseness of splendour grew at length wearisome, but one must needs respect the brain power which invented it. For myself, I confess that I had sooner see a real play without any scenic adornment at all than this with its gorgeous trappings. For me, the Wolsey of Irving is but a faint memory: it has no place beside his Richelieu or his Becket. Let us dismiss it by saying that he kept well within a historical picture of unrivalled splendour. The part of the King was exactly suited to the robust method of the late William Terriss, and he never played any character in classical drama so effectively. He was a Holbein come to life—grand in face and figure, grand in manner, grand in costume. If Henry VIII. was indeed such a man as this, no wonder Niccolo Sagudino, secretary to the Venetian Embassy, declared that "His Majesty was the handsomest potentate I ever set eyes on." No wonder the Italian preferred him even to Francis I., most superb of French sovereigns! As Mr. Terriss wore costume after costume of bewildering splendour one felt that silk and velvet, lace, and feathers, were specially invented for his adornment. The following is the complete play-bill of the performance on the first night:

TUESDAY, JANUARY 5TH, 1892,

WILL BE PRESENTED, FOR THE FIRST TIME UNDER MR. IRVING'S MANAGEMENT,

**Shakespeare's Play,**

THE FAMOUS HISTORY OF THE LIFE OF

**KING HENRY THE EIGHTH.**

<i>King Henry VIII.</i>	. . . . .	MR. WILLIAM TERRISS.
<i>Cardinal Wolsey</i>	. . . . .	MR. IRVING.
<i>Cardinal Campeius</i>	. . . . .	MR. BEAUMONT.
<i>Capucius (ambassador from Charles V.)</i>	. . . . .	MR. TABB.
<i>Cranmer (Archbishop of Canterbury)</i>	. . . . .	MR. ARTHUR STIRLING.
<i>Duke of Norfolk</i>	. . . . .	MR. WENMAN.
<i>Duke of Buckingham</i>	. . . . .	MR. FORBES ROBERTSON.
<i>Duke of Suffolk</i>	. . . . .	MR. TYARS.
<i>Earl of Surrey</i>	. . . . .	MR. CLARENCE HAGUE.
<i>Lord Chamberlain</i>	. . . . .	MR. ALFRED BISHOP.
<i>Gardiner (afterwards Bishop of Winchester)</i>	. . . . .	MR. LACY.
<i>Lord Sands</i>	. . . . .	MR. GILBERT FARQUHAR.
<i>Sir Henry Guildford</i>	. . . . .	MR. HARVEY.
<i>Sir Thomas Lovell</i>	. . . . .	MR. STEWART.
<i>Sir Anthony Denny</i>	. . . . .	MR. DAVIS.
<i>Sir Nicholas Vaux</i>	. . . . .	MR. BELMORE.
<i>Cromwell (servant to Wolsey)</i>	. . . . .	MR. GORDON CRAIG.
<i>Griffith (gentleman-usher to Queen Katherine)</i>	. . . . .	MR. HOWE.
<i>Gentlemen</i>	. . . . .	{ MR. JOHNSON. MR. ARCHER.
<i>Garter, King-at-Arms</i>	. . . . .	MR. BELMORE.
<i>Surveyor to Duke of Buckingham</i>	. . . . .	MR. HAVILAND.
<i>Brandon</i>	. . . . .	MR. SELDON.
<i>Sergeant-at-Arms</i>	. . . . .	MR. POWELL.
<i>A Messenger</i>	. . . . .	MR. LORRIS.
<i>A Scribe</i>	. . . . .	MR. REYNOLDS.
<i>A Secretary</i>	. . . . .	MR. CUSHING.
<i>Queen Katherine</i>	. . . . .	MISS ELLEN TERRY.
<i>Anne Bullen</i>	. . . . .	MISS VIOLET VANBRUGH.
<i>An Old Lady</i>	. . . . .	MISS LE THIÈRE.
<i>Patience</i>	. . . . .	MRS. PAUNCEFORT.

Lords, Ladies, Archbishops, Bishops, Judges, Lord Mayor  
and Aldermen, etc,

SYNOPSIS OF SCENERY.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*London : the Palace at Bridewell* (J. Harker). SCENE II.—*Outside the Palace* (Hawes Craven). SCENE III.—*The Council Chamber in the Palace* (Hawes Craven). SCENE IV.—*A Courtyard* (Hawes Craven). SCENE V.—*A Hall in York Place* (Hawes Craven).

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The King's Stairs, Westminster* (Hawes Craven). SCENE II.—*An Ante-chamber in the Palace* (Hawes Craven). SCENE III.—*A Garden in the Palace* (Hawes Craven). SCENE IV.—*A Hall in Blackfriars* (Hawes Craven).

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Queen's Apartment* (J. Harker). SCENE II.—*The Palace at Bridewell* (J. Harker).

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Street in Westminster* (W. Telbin). SCENE II.—*Kimbolton* (W. Telbin).

ACT V.

SCENE.—*Greenwich : Church of the Grey Friars* (Hawes Craven).

The Overture, Entr'actes, and Incidental Music have been composed expressly for the Play by MR. EDWARD GERMAN.

Musical Director: MR. MEREDITH BALI. Chorus-Master: MR. TABB.

The Trio, "Orpheus with his Lute," sung by MISSES KATE LEWIS, LANCASTER, and MINNIE ROBINSON.

It was, of course, inevitable that Henry Irving should play King Lear. Of all the actors who make speeches from the stage after the fall of the curtain, assuredly he is the most astute. When the last scene of Shakespeare's enormous tragedy had been performed, he came

in front and said, "If our humble efforts have been able to suggest to any one here assembled one of the countless beauties of this Titanic work, we have been indeed amply repaid." The most discontented and churlish spectator could not take exception to this moderate estimate of that which had been achieved by the manager of the Lyceum and those colleagues whom it is ever his delight to honour in the execution of an immense task.

I have seen six or seven actors as Lear in England and in Germany, and, while some have been more impressive than others, not one has seemed to me satisfactory. From Rogers's *Table Talk* we learn that Garrick's interpretation was in parts absolutely thrilling. In the delightful pages of Dr. Doran we read of the "grandure, the touchingness, and the sublimity" of Edmund Kean's Lear. "It was," says that writer in *Their Majesties' Servants*, "throughout thoroughly original in conception and in execution, and by it he maintained his pre-eminency, and sustained, as I have said, without increasing his old glory. He did not quite realize his own assertion: 'I will make the audience as mad as I shall be!'" Kemble's Lear seems to have been equal, if not superior, to that of Garrick, especially when he was inspired by the Cordelia of Mrs. Siddons. Professor Morley tells us that Phelps conceived the character with a sense rather of the pathetic than the terrible. At Swansea, in 1833, Macready played King Lear for the first time. "How?" he wrote in his diary. "Certainly not well—not so well as I rehearsed it; crude fictitious voice, no point—in short, a failure!" Mr. William Archer reminds us, in his monograph of the great actor, that it after-

wards became one of Macready's best Shakespearian performances.

It is my misfortune that I only saw Irving's Lear once, and that was the first time he played the character. On that occasion he was obviously suffering from the nervousness inseparable from what must have been to him a severe ordeal. As the result of this, he frequently lapsed into eccentricity of pronunciation and violence of gesture. At times, indeed, he was inaudible and incomprehensible. Like Phelps, he took a pathetic rather than a terrible view of the character, and his conception seemed to me decidedly to err on the side of benevolence. Irving had his fine moments, but these were balanced, if not weighed down, by moments of extravagance and grotesqueness. His appearance was splendidly picturesque. The imposing semi-barbaric figure, royal even in craziness and senility, is happily preserved for us in Mr. Bernard Partridge's drawings. In view of Irving's rooted objection to being photographed in character, Mr. Partridge's studies of him in his great parts are of extraordinary value.

Irving is one of the few actors who can play a part many times without becoming mechanical. Indeed, while he rarely changes the main lines of his conception, he is for ever inventing new details or developing old ones. He gave a performance of Lear on the fiftieth night of the run which was universally admitted to be far superior to, and in many respects widely different from, that which was witnessed by the first-night audience. At the same time, King Lear cannot properly be included amongst his great successes. No other living English actor of repute has attempted the part. I reprint the programme of the first performance:



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10TH, 1892,

WILL BE PRESENTED, FOR THE FIRST TIME UNDER MR. IRVING'S MANAGEMENT,

Shakespeare's Tragedy,

## KING LEAR.

<i>Lear (King of Britain)</i>	MR. IRVING.
<i>Edgar (son to Gloster)</i>	MR. WILLIAM TERRISS.
<i>Edmund (bastard son to Gloster)</i>	MR. FRANK COOPER.
<i>Earl of Gloster</i>	MR. ALFRED BISHOP.
<i>Earl of Kent</i>	MR. W. J. HOLLOWAY.
<i>Duke of Cornwall</i>	MR. HAGUE.
<i>Duke of Albany</i>	MR. TYARS.
<i>King of France</i>	MR. PERCIVAL.
<i>Duke of Burgundy</i>	MR. BOND.
<i>Curan (a courtier)</i>	MR. HARVEY.
<i>Old Man (tenant to Gloster)</i>	MR. HOWE.
<i>Fool</i>	MR. HAVILAND.
<i>Oswald (steward to Goneril)</i>	MR. GORDON CRAIG.
<i>Physician</i>	MR. LACY.
<i>A Knight</i>	MR. TABB.
<i>A Gentleman</i>	MR. IAN ROBERTSON.
<i>An Officer</i>	MR. LORRISS.
<i>A Herald</i>	MR. BELMORE.
<i>A Messenger</i>	MR. POWELL.
<i>Goneril (wife to Albany,)</i>	Daughters to Lear. { MISS ADA DYAS. { MISS MAUD MILTON. { MISS ELLEN TERRY.
<i>Regan (wife to Cornwall)</i>	
<i>Cordelia</i>	

Knights attending on LEAR, Officers, Messengers, Soldiers,  
and Attendants.

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENERY.

## ACT I.

SCENE I.—*King Lear's Palace.* SCENE II.—*Earl of Gloster's Castle.*  
SCENE III.—*Duke of Albany's Castle.*

## ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Court within Gloster's Castle.* SCENE II.—*Open Country*  
SCENE III.—*Court within Gloster's Castle.*

## ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Heath.* SCENE II.—*Another part of the Heath.* SCENE III.  
*Farmhouse.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Albany's Castle.* SCENE II.—*Open Country.* SCENE III.—*Country near Dover.* SCENE IV.—*French Camp.* SCENE V.—*Tent in the French Camp.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*British Camp near Dover.* SCENE II.—*The same.*

SCENE: *Britain.*

The Scenes of Lear's Palace and Gloster's and Albany's Castles are from designs by FORD MADOX BROWN.

The Overture and Preludes composed expressly by HAMILTON CLARKE.

A remarkable feature of the revival was Mr. Haviland's interpretation of the very difficult part of the Fool. It is almost needless to add that the Cordelia of Miss Terry was very beautiful, especially in the later scenes of the tragedy.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### BECKET

FEBRUARY 6TH, 1893

TO many persons, Irving's supreme achievement, both as actor and manager, was the production of Tennyson's *Becket*. Tennyson, during his lifetime, failed to prove himself a paying or a popular playwright. In his dramas he sometimes wrote superb poetry, but still they were not, as they stood, good acting plays. Irving had before him *Becket* as it came from the Laureate's hand, and his first business was so to edit it that it should pay its way on the stage of the Lyceum. He approached his task and fulfilled it with consummate skill. The result of a risky experiment is best told in a letter written by the actor to the present Lord Tennyson :

"We have passed the fiftieth performance of *Becket*, which is in the heyday of its success. I think that I may, without hereafter being credited with any inferior motive, give again the opinion which I previously expressed to your loved and honoured father. To me *Becket* is a very noble play, with something of that lofty feeling and that far-reaching influence which belong to a passion play. There are in it moments of passion and pathos which are the aim and end of dramatic art, and which, when they exist, atone to the

audience for the endurance of long acts." And he continues: "I know such a play has an ennobling influence on both the audience who see it and the actors who play it."

Lord Tennyson, in his biography of his father, tells us: "Assuredly Irving's interpretation of the many-sided, many-mooded statesman—soldier—saint—was as vivid and as subtle a piece of acting as has been seen in our day." In addition, to look at the matter for a moment from the purely material standpoint, we have Irving's statement that *Becket* "was one of the three most successful plays produced by him at the Lyceum."

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6TH, 1893,

AT EIGHT O'CLOCK,

WILL BE PRESENTED FOR THE FIRST TIME

## BECKET,

BY

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON.

<i>Thomas Becket, Chancellor of England</i>	}	MR. IRVING.
<i>(afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury)</i>		
<i>Henry II. (King of England)</i>	.	MR. WILLIAM TERRISS.
<i>King Louis of France</i>	.	MR. BOND.
<i>Gilbert Foliot (Bishop of London)</i>	.	MR. LACY.
<i>Roger (Archbishop of York)</i>	.	MR. BEAUMONT.
<i>Bishop of Hereford.</i>	.	MR. CUSHING.
<i>Hilary (Bishop of Chichester)</i>	.	MR. ARCHER.
<i>John of Salisbury</i>	} <i>Friends of Becket</i>	MR. BISHOP.
<i>Herbert of Bosham</i>		MR. HAVILAND.
<i>Edward Grim (a monk of Cambridge)</i>	.	MR. W. J. HOLLOWAY.
<i>Sir Reginald Fitzurse</i>	} <i>The four Knights of the King's house- hold, enemies of Becket</i>	MR. FRANK COOPER.
<i>Sir Richard de Brito</i>		MR. TYARS.
<i>Sir William de Tracy</i>		MR. HAGUE.
<i>Sir Hugh de Morville</i>		MR. PERCIVAL.
<i>De Broc</i>	.	MR. TABB.
<i>Richard de Hastings (Grand Prior of Templars)</i>	} . . .	MR. SELDON.

<i>The Youngest Knight Templar</i>	MR. GORDON CRAIG.
<i>Lord Leicester.</i>	MR. HARVEY.
<i>Philip de Eleemosyna (the Pope's almoner)</i>	MR. HOWE.
<i>Herald</i>	MR. L. BELMORE.
<i>Geoffrey (son of Rosamund and Henry)</i>	MASTER LEO BYRNE.
<i>Retainers</i>	{ MR. YELDHAM.
	{ MR. LORRIS.
<i>Countrymen</i>	{ MR. JOHNSON.
	{ MR. REYNOLDS.
<i>John of Oxford (called the Swearer)</i>	MR. IAN ROBERTSON.
<i>Servant</i>	MR. DAVIS.
<i>Eleanor of Aquitaine (Queen of England, divorced from Louis of France)</i>	MISS GENEVIEVE WARD.
<i>Margery.</i>	MISS KATE PHILLIPS.
<i>Rosamund de Clifford</i>	MISS ELLEN TERRY.
Knights, Monks, Herald, Soldiers, Retainers, etc.	

The Scenery has been designed and painted by W. TELBIN, J. HARKER,  
and HAWES CRAVEN.

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENERY.

### PROLOGUE.

SCENE I. *A Castle in Normandy* (W. Telbin). SCENE II.—*The same*  
(W. Telbin).

### ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Becket's House in London* (J. Harker). SCENE II.—*Street in Northampton leading to the Castle* (Hawes Craven). SCENE III.—*The Hall in Northampton Castle* (Hawes Craven).

### ACT II.

SCENE.—*Rosamund's Bower* (Hawes Craven).

### ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Montmirail: "The Meeting of the Kings"* (Hawes Craven).  
SCENE II.—*Outside the Wood near Rosamund's Bower* (Hawes Craven).  
SCENE III.—*Rosamund's Bower* (Hawes Craven).

"At Merton the Archbishop assumed the ordinary habit of the black canons of the Augustinian Rule, which dress he wore to the end of his life."—GRIM.

### ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Castle in Normandy: King's Chamber* (W. Telbin).  
SCENE II.—*A Room in Canterbury Monastery* (W. Telbin). SCENE III.—*North Transept of Canterbury Cathedral* (W. Telbin).

PERIOD: *Twelfth Century.*

The Overture, Entr'actes, and Incidental Music by C. VILLIERS  
STANFORD.

## OVERTURE.

ENTR'ACTE . . . . .	"King Henry."
ENTR'ACTE . . . . .	"Rosamund's Bower."
ENTR'ACTE . . . . .	"Becket's Rest."
ENTR'ACTE . . . . .	"The Martyrdom."

Musical Director : MR. MEREDITH BALL.

## MARGERY'S SONG.

Babble in bower,	Kiss me, little one ;
Under the rose !	Nobody near !
Bee mustn't buzz,	Grasshopper, grasshopper,
Whoop—but he knows.	Whoop—you can hear.
Kiss in the bower,	
Tit on the tree !	
Bird mustn't tell,	
Whoop—he can see.	

Henry Irving seemed to feel that he had a sacred duty to perform to the poet who was then recently buried in the austere solemnity of Westminster Abbey, and he performed that duty right nobly. *Becket* was put on the stage with no undue magnificence of spectacle. All, in the matter of scenic display, that could help the imagination was there, but, on the other hand, there was no parade of scenery for its own sake. Irving's performance of the chief person of the play was as near perfection as anything he has done. All the mannerisms which had defaced his *Lear* had disappeared as if by magic. He was a great actor interpreting a great part in a great manner. The statesman-priest was presented to us in the most convincing fashion. The old, immortal history of England lived before our eyes.

In the opening scene we see Becket as the boon companion of the King ; a man of the world, entirely

comprised in worldly things, ever ready to minister to his master's pleasure :

A doter on white pheasant-flesh at feasts,  
A sauce-deviser for thy days of fish,  
A dish-designer, and most amorous  
Of good old sound liberal Gascon wine.

With his acceptance of the Archbishopric of Canterbury Becket becomes a new man. From the extreme of sensuality he passes to the extreme of asceticism. The transition takes place too rapidly : no evolutionary stage is shown ; and this is undoubtedly one of the defects of the play. So fine, however, was Irving's performance that one hardly noticed it. Never before did the actor deliver verse so well. He surprised everybody by his melodious diction. Mr. Archer, indeed, was so astonished that, in his notice in *The World*, he impressed upon the compositor the necessity of setting up the word "diction" in large capitals. By those who had the good fortune to be present, the first night of *Becket* will never be forgotten. It is a stirring thing to see a vast audience unanimous in its enthusiasm for an actor who is playing a grand part in a grand style.



## CHAPTER XXVII

### KING ARTHUR AND CYMBELINE

SEPTEMBER 1894—APRIL 1897

THE 21st of September, 1894, was a great day in the history of the Prince's Theatre, Bristol, for on that date Irving produced Dr. Conan Doyle's little play, *A Story of Waterloo*, for the first time on any stage. It is, I believe, the only occasion on which he has presented a new piece in the provinces previous to its performance at the Lyceum. The excitement at Bristol was intense. One need hardly say that the house was packed from floor to ceiling, for a small army of London critics invaded the western city in order to see what kind of part Dr. Conan Doyle had provided for the great actor. It was universally agreed that, though a mere trifle, *A Story of Waterloo* proved that the creator of Sherlock Holmes had distinct aptitude for writing for the stage. The little play held the spectators from first to last, for its pathos was as genuine as it was unforced. As Corporal Gregory Brewster, Irving gave a picture of senility which was painful by reason of its photograph accuracy. The most capable critics did not hesitate to compare this extraordinary performance with the best impersonations of Lafont, and one of them declared that no finer example of the actor's art had been seen since Robson

played Daddy Hardacre at the old Olympic. The cast was as follows :

### A STORY OF WATERLOO.

<i>Corporal Gregory Brewster (aged 86)</i>	. . .	MR. HENRY IRVING.
<i>Sergeant Archie McDonald, R.A.</i>	. . .	MR. FULLER MELLISH.
<i>Colonel James Midwinter (Royal Scots Guards)</i>		MR. HAVILAND.
<i>Norah Brewster (the Corporal's grand-niece)</i>	. . .	MISS ANNIE HUGHES.

*A Story of Waterloo* was first performed in London by the same interpreters at a matinée at the Garrick Theatre on the 17th of December, 1894.

It was well known that for a long time Irving had been anxious to produce a play based on the Arthurian legend—indeed, the late W. G. Wills had written a portion of such a drama for presentation at the Lyceum. Eventually the work was intrusted to Mr. Comyns Carr, and the result, while far from being a great poetic drama, was a workmanlike and effective chronicle play, which added much to the reputation of the writer and turned out a brilliant theatrical success. No pains were spared to present *King Arthur* in a manner worthy of the subject. Exquisite costumes were designed by Sir Edward Burne-Jones ; beautiful music was specially composed by Sir Arthur Sullivan ; Mr. Forbes Robertson was engaged to play Sir Lancelot, and the part of Morgan le Fay was assigned to Miss Genevieve Ward. Inspired by Sir Edward Burne-Jones, Mr. Hawes Craven and Mr. J. Harker depicted in marvellous fashion the Magic Mere, the Great Hall at Camelot, the Whitethorn Wood, and the Tower and Prison of King Arthur's Castle.

King Arthur was not, from the purely theatrical standpoint, a very effective part for a great actor. The central figure in Mr. Comyns Carr's version of the ancient

story is Sir Lancelot, a *rôle* to which Mr. Forbes Robertson, with his splendid presence, his beautiful voice, and his fine intelligence, gave the fullest value. The triumph of *King Arthur* was, at the first glance, Mr. Forbes Robertson's triumph. Again, great honour was due to Miss Lena Ashwell for her refined impersonation of Elaine. Of Ellen Terry's Guinevere one need only say that what it lacked in passion it made up in sweetness. Irving, as the King, proved himself a strong man, who never condescended to make such points as would tickle the ears of the groundlings. He made the most of his legitimate opportunities in masterly fashion, and his King Arthur was not unworthy of his Becket. The following is the cast of the first production of the play :

## KING ARTHUR.

BY J. COMYNS CARR.

First produced at the Lyceum on the 12th of January, 1895.

<i>King Arthur</i>	. . . . .	MR. IRVING.
<i>Sir Lancelot</i>	. . . . .	MR. FORBES ROBERTSON.
<i>Sir Mordred</i>	. . . . .	MR. FRANK COOPER.
<i>Sir Kay</i>	. . . . .	MR. TYARS.
<i>Sir Gawaine</i>	. . . . .	MR. HAGUE.
<i>Sir Bedevere</i>	. . . . .	MR. FULLER MELLISH.
<i>Sir Agravaine</i>	. . . . .	MR. LACY.
<i>Sir Percivale</i>	. . . . .	MR. BUCKLEY.
<i>Sir Lavaine</i>	. . . . .	MR. JULIUS KNIGHT.
<i>Sir Dagonet</i>	. . . . .	MR. HARVEY.
<i>Merlin</i>	. . . . .	MR. VALENTINE.
<i>Messenger</i>	. . . . .	MR. BELMORE.
<i>Gaoler</i>	. . . . .	MR. TABB.
<i>Morgan le Fay</i>	. . . . .	MISS GENEVIEVE WARD.
<i>Elaine</i>	. . . . .	MISS LENA ASHWELL.
<i>Clarissant</i>	. . . . .	MISS ANNIE HUGHES.
<i>Spirit of the Lake</i>	. . . . .	MISS MAUD MILTON.
<i>Guinevere</i>	. . . . .	MISS ELLEN TERRY.

It is worth noting that *King Arthur* was praised alike by the older dramatic critics, and by that sanest and most valiant of free lances, Mr. William Archer.

On the 4th of May, 1895, *A Chapter from Don Quixote* was produced. This proved to be a compression into two short scenes of a four-act play by Mr. Wills. In my opinion the two scenes were two too many. But *The Athenæum* considered Irving's performance justified the production of this feeble trifle. "We are thankful," wrote the critic of that journal, "to have seen Mr. Irving in the character; and for the pleasure of preserving recollections of the tall, gaunt, stooping figure, with the grave, ceremonious courtesy, and the eyes aflame with enthusiasm, we would pardon scenes of horseplay worse than those which are presented. Next after Malvolio, Don Quixote was the part in which we most hoped to see Mr. Irving. It has been seen, and constitutes a much finer piece of acting than the preceding, being what that was not—a piece of perfect interpretation. The method in *Art* which in *Shylock* failed greatly to commend itself, and in *Lear* did not commend itself at all, is here admirable in result, and the Don Quixote of Mr. Irving is the very hero of our dreams."

In July Irving received the honour of knighthood, a circumstance with which I shall deal in the concluding chapter of this book.

On the 22nd of September, 1896, *Cymbeline* was produced at the Lyceum, when the cast was as follows:

#### CYMBELINE.

##### BRITONS :

<i>Cymbeline</i>	.	.	.	.	.	MR. MACKLIN.
<i>Cloten</i>	.	.	.	.	.	MR. NORMAN FORBES.
<i>Posthumus Leonatus</i>	.	.	.	.	.	MR. FRANK COOPER.

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<i>Belarius</i>	. . . . .	MR. FREDERIC ROBINSON.
<i>Guiderius</i>	. . . . .	MR. BEN WEBSTER.
<i>Arviragus</i>	. . . . .	MR. GORDON CRAIG.
<i>Pisanio</i>	. . . . .	MR. TYARS.
<i>Cornelius</i>	. . . . .	MR. LACY.
<i>Two British Captains</i>	. . . . .	{MR. ARCHER. MR. NEEDHAM.
<i>Two British Lords</i>	. . . . .	{MR. CLARENCE HAGUE. MR. BELMORE.
<i>Queen</i>	. . . . .	MISS GENEVIEVE WARD.
<i>Helen</i>	. . . . .	MRS. TYARS.
<i>Imogen</i>	. . . . .	MISS ELLEN TERRY.

## ROMANS :

<i>Iachimo</i>	. . . . .	HENRY IRVING.
<i>Philario</i>	. . . . .	MR. FULLER MELLISH.
<i>Caius Lucius</i>	. . . . .	MR. H. COOPER CLIFFE.
<i>A Roman Captain</i>	. . . . .	MR. TABB.

Posthumus Leonatus has been a favourite part with many of the greatest English actors, and when it was announced that *Cymbeline* would be produced at the Lyceum, it was generally expected that Henry Irving would interpret a character in which Garrick, Kemble, Macready, and Kean had distinguished themselves. Irving, however, chose the part of Iachimo. Macready played this rôle at Covent Garden in 1820-21 ; but he tells us that his impersonation was ineffective, while one dramatic critic described his rendering as "the worst he had ever seen." Irving did so much with the character that in some measure the symmetry of the play was destroyed. His Iachimo was no "slight thing of Italy," but a villain so subtle and insinuating as to be terribly formidable. Irving, though he did not play the principal part, was—always excepting Imogen—nevertheless the dominant figure of the drama. His Iachimo is one of the most finished and satisfactory of his Shakespearian performances.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE LATEST PLAYS

APRIL 1897—1899

TWO great actors—Henry Irving and Coquelin *aîné*—have played Napoleon, a part for which they are alike totally unfitted physically, rather because they must than because they would.

The success of Madame Réjane as Madame Sans-Gêne seems to have fired the ambition of Miss Ellen Terry to attempt a similar triumph in the *rôle*, and Sardou's play was doubtless produced at the Lyceum for her gratification. The play was translated by Mr. Comyns Carr, whose version was first presented on the 10th of April, 1897, with a magnificence, in the matter of scenery and costumes, which exceeded that of the original French production. Irving's "make-up," or rather transformation, as Napoleon, was a wonder to all beholders. The tall, thin man had become short and squat; the outlines of Irving's head had developed into those of Napoleon, and the famous Irving gait or walk or strut, of which we have all heard so much, had entirely disappeared. The thing was consummately clever as a *tour-de-force*. Irving's acting of what of the character of Napoleon there was in Sardou's play was very good; but, truth to tell, an actor of his powers had no business to play such a part. The Lyceum



SIR HENRY IRVING, TO NAPOLEON OF THAT ILK:—"WELL, UPON MY LIFE!  
I HARDLY KNOW MYSELF."

CARTOON BY ALFRED BRYAN. FROM "THE ENTR'ACTE," APRIL 24TH, 1897.

production of *Madame Sans-Gêne* was the means of introducing Irving to the veteran French dramatist, who



presented him with the inkstand used in writing the play. The ultimate result of the correspondence between the two, who have, I believe, never met one another, was the commission given to Sardou for *Robespierre*. The cast and synopsis of scenery of *Madame Sans-Gêne* are



CARICATURE BY ALFRED BRYAN OF IRVING AND ROBERT TABER IN  
"PETER THE GREAT." FROM "THE ILLUSTRATED SPORTING AND  
DRAMATIC NEWS."

so long that they would occupy two or three pages of this book. Suffice it to say, therefore, that important parts were taken by artists so distinguished as Messrs. Mackintosh, Frank Cooper, Ben Webster, F. H. Macklin,

and Norman Forbes, and the Misses Julia Arthur, Maud Milton, and Gertrude Kingston.

On the 1st of January, 1898, a play in five acts, entitled *Peter the Great*, by Laurence Irving, was acted for the first time. The following is the play-bill:

## PETER THE GREAT.

<i>Peter the Great</i>	. . . . .	HENRY IRVING.
<i>Alexis (his son)</i>	. . . . .	MR. ROBERT TABER.
<i>Prince Menshikoff</i>	} <i>Peter's fellow-workers.</i>	MR. COOPER CLIFFE.
<i>Peter Tolstoi (afterwards "Count")</i>		MR. MACKINTOSH.
<i>Admiral Apraxin</i>		MR. W. FARREN, JUN.
<i>Prince Dolgorouki</i>		MR. BELMORE.
<i>Prince Abraham Lapoukhine</i> ( <i>Eudoxia's brother</i> )	}	MR. BRYDONE.
<i>Prince Zabouroff</i>		MR. ARCHER.
<i>Mansouroff</i>	. . . . .	MR. FULLER MELLISH.
<i>Alexander Kikine</i>	. . . . .	MR. BEN WEBSTER.
<i>Jacob Ignatieff (confessor to Alexis)</i>	. . . . .	MR. TYARS.
<i>Field-marshal Count Daun</i> ( <i>Viceroy of Naples</i> )	}	MR. F. H. MACKLIN.
<i>Colonel Bauer (a German)</i>		MR. NORMAN FORBES.
<i>Major Steinmitz</i>	. . . . .	MR. S. JOHNSON.
<i>Two Neapolitan Captains</i>	. . . . .	{ MR. PASSMORE. MR. HOWARD.
<i>Carlo</i>	. . . . .	MR. REYNOLDS.
<i>Officers</i>	. . . . .	{ MR. TABB. MR. DAVISS.
<i>Eudoxia (divorced by Peter,</i> <i>mother of Alexis)</i>	}	MISS ROCKMAN.
<i>Euphrosine</i>		MISS BARRYMORE.
<i>Masha</i>	. . . . .	MISS SHELDON.
<i>Catherine (Empress of Russia,</i> <i>Peter's second wife)</i>	}	MISS ELLEN TERRY.

Boysars, Ecclesiastics, Officers, Officials, Soldiers, Citizens, etc.

PERIOD: 1717—1718.

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENERY.

## ACT I.

SCENE.—*Moscow: the Kremlin.*

## ACT II.

SCENE.—*St. Petersburg (the Building of the City) : Alexis' Room.*

## ACT III.

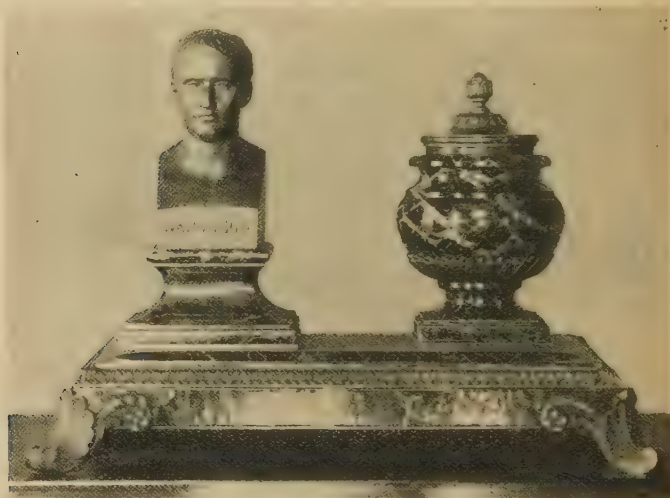
SCENE.—*Naples : Garden of the Castle of St. Elmo.*

## ACT IV.

SCENE.—*St. Petersburg : Hall of the Senate.*

## ACT V.

SCENE.—*St. Petersburg : Casemate of the Fortress.*



INKSTAND USED BY SARDOU IN WRITING "MADAME SANS-GÊNE."

*Peter the Great* had not a long run, as *Lyceum* runs go, but it was one of the most interesting experiments that have ever [been] made at that theatre. Doubtless Henry Irving was proud to produce a play from the pen of his son, but nobody can reasonably say that his pride partook of folly. The manager of any English theatre might fairly be held blameless in accepting such

a drama as that by Laurence Irving. *Peter the Great* is not a great play, and it showed in the most marked manner that its author was not yet master of his exquisitely difficult craft. But to compensate for this, it proved very clearly that Laurence Irving had disdained the conventional way, and thought for himself. It gave evidence, moreover, of imagination, and of the skilful adaptation for dramatic purposes of historical incidents. No doubt it would have succeeded better if it had possessed more "comic relief," but in that case it seems to me that its success would have been of a less worthy kind. Its author had the full courage of his convictions, and although the result was very far from being a masterpiece, it was, for so young a man, a most promising essay. Irving, in playing the dominating part, not unnaturally showed that he was determined to give to the character of Peter its utmost value. It seemed to me that, in his anxiety as to the fate of the play, he relapsed into mannerisms which he had for a long time dropped altogether or softened almost out of existence. At the same time, his was a fine performance, at once picturesque and vigorous. The impatience of the strong father for the weak son, the intolerance of the father for the ideals of the son which were diametrically opposed to his own, were fully brought out. Irving's costumes, though doubtless historically correct, struck me as being grotesque and distracting. Personally I much regret that *Peter the Great* was only a *succès d'estime*: assuredly it was far more worthy the stage of the Lyceum than such stuff as *The Dead Heart*.

We may dismiss *The Medicine Man*, produced on the 4th of May, in a very few words. Written as it

was by two such brilliant men of letters as H. D. Traill and Robert Hichens, great hopes were based on it ; and



CARICATURE BY ALFRED BRYAN. FROM "THE ILLUSTRATED SPORTING AND DRAMATIC NEWS."

those hopes in the event were most bitterly disappointed. Polished though the dialogue was, and interesting as was the subject-matter, the piece was impossible, and

Irving could make little of the part of Dr. Tregenna. Of all his more important productions, *The Medicine Man* had the shortest run.

Early in the present year the Lyceum Theatre passed



CARICATURE BY ALFRED BRYAN. FROM "THE ILLUSTRATED SPORTING AND DRAMATIC NEWS."

into the hands of a limited liability company, but happily it has not ceased to be Irving's London Home. After a long illness, the great actor reappeared at the theatre which had been so long his own on the 15th of April

in *Robespierre*, a drama in five acts by Victorien Sardou. The "tumult of acclaim" with which Henry Irving was then greeted must have assured him that his hold over the hearts of English play-goers was as firm as ever. The incidents concerning the production of *Robespierre*, the criticisms which were written of it, its triumphant success, need not be discussed here. It may, however, be stated that never before had a great French dramatist specially written a play for an English theatre.



## CHAPTER XXIX

### IRVING AS MANAGER

BY many of those to whom, as an actor, he is least satisfying, Henry Irving as a manager is regarded with the highest approval and most profound respect. It has been stated, and very fairly stated, that whatever he has done at the Lyceum he has done with a completeness of which no previous manager ever dreamed. And if we consider the whole of his achievement since the end of December 1878, it must be confessed that it is one without any parallel during the last five-and-twenty years. His reverence for Shakespeare has taken the practical form of presenting a number—albeit not a very large number—of his plays with a magnificence which, happily, has nearly always been kept in check by good taste. I know that there are many superfine play-goers who prefer to see the classic drama staged with Elizabethan simplicity; but these, after all, are only an infinitesimal minority of those who flock to the theatres. To an overwhelming majority such decorative accessories as those to which Irving has accustomed us emphatically aid the imagination. There is ample evidence that the old actors were dissatisfied with the squalor of their meagre scenic surroundings. Garrick, notably, did everything in his power to improve the setting of the stage, and paid his scene-painter a handsome

salary. The real question is whether or not Irving has been unduly lavish—whether he has buried the play in the spectacle. It may be that in one or two instances he has come perilously near doing so, but on the whole it seems to me that he has observed a most admirable propriety in the matter. And what feasts of rich and harmonious colour he has given us! How enchanting are the scenes which he has put before us! “Nero did not surpass, nor the late M. Perrin equal him, as a *metteur-en-scène*,” says Mr. Walkley. “His series of Shakespearian land- and seascapes, Veronese gardens open to the moonlight, a Venice unpolluted by Cook’s touristry, groves of cedar and cypress in Messina, Illyrian shores, Scotch hillsides, and grim castles, Bosworth Field—what a panorama he has given us! The sensuous, plastic, pictorial side of Shakespeare had never been seen before he showed it. Here you have the flamboyant artist outdoing Delacroix on his own ground.”

The mere enumeration of the names of those artists who have assisted Irving in bringing about the results so eloquently described by Mr. Walkley would be impressive. He has gone to the leaders of the most widely differing schools of Art—to Sir Edward Burne-Jones, Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Mr. Seymour Lucas, and a dozen others—in order that everything might be appropriate in detail and beautiful as a whole; and, inspired by him, scenic artists, such as Hawes Craven, Joseph Harker, W. Telbin, and W. Hann, have carried their art to a marvellous point of accomplishment. But Irving has known when to be sumptuous and when to be simple. *Henry VIII.* and *King Lear* were put on the stage in very different fashion. The former, a

mere string of dramatic incidents, was made the excuse for an astoundingly splendid spectacle ; the scenery for the latter, an overwhelming tragedy, was studiously unobtrusive. In the matter of costume Irving has been equally careful. Without being the slave of archæology, he has been accurate whenever accuracy was compatible with beauty. It is because the Lyceum productions have approached perfection in all their parts that they are so memorable. Even in the writing of the incidental music Irving has displayed his taste and his enterprise by employing such composers as Sir Arthur Sullivan and Mr. Villiers Stanford. Of course, every department of Irving's great enterprise has not been directed by himself alone. In Mr. Bram Stoker, Mr. Loveday, and Mr. Charles Howson he has had lieutenants of remarkable ability and untiring energy.

When first Irving took up the management of the Lyceum it was hinted that the firmament of that theatre would contain only one star—himself. This he immediately disproved by engaging Miss Ellen Terry. Here, already, was another great light. As time went on, players of such enormous popularity as William Terriss, and of such rare distinction as Forbes Robertson, joined the ranks of the company, which was further strengthened by the inclusion of veterans such as Mrs. Stirling, Mrs. Chippendale, and Mr. Howe. It is, moreover, not to be gainsaid that the Lyceum has proved invaluable as a training school for the present generation of players. It was with Irving that Miss Winifred Emery, Mr. George Alexander, and Mr. Martin Harvey—to name only three—gained the most valuable part of their experience. As to occasional engagements, we find such artistes as Miss Genevieve

Ward, Miss Millward, Miss Alma Murray, Miss Kate Phillips, and Miss Violet Vanbrugh frequently in the bill. It seems to me that Irving has cast his plays almost as generously as he has staged them.

A dozen newspapers and magazines have given descriptions of Irving's autocratic manner of conducting rehearsals, and a pamphlet might be made up of his sometimes sarcastic, sometimes humorous, rebukes of those who failed promptly to do his behests. Everybody who has attended a rehearsal at the Lyceum has, however, been impressed by the man's extraordinary patience, by the enormous pains which he takes in the smallest matters. In this connection, the impression produced on the mind of Edwin Booth is interesting. "As a stage-manager," said Booth, "he is despotic. He sits on the stage during rehearsals, watching every movement and listening to every word. If he sees anything to correct or alter, he rises and points out the fault, giving the proper form, when the scene is repeated. He commands all points, with an understanding that his will is absolute law, that it is not to be disputed, whether it concerns the entry of a mere messenger who bears a letter, or whether it is the reading of an important line by Miss Terry. From first to last he rules the stage with an iron will, but as an offset to this he displays a patience that is marvellous."

In a very interesting comparison of the methods of stage management of Irving and Sardou, which appeared in the *Westminster Gazette*, Mr. Tighe Hopkins says of the former :

"He is a martinet on the boards, as every manager who understands his art should be, and his rule is

autocratic. His success lies in his authority. His company have always had complete confidence in him, and have been content in most matters to take their cues from the chief. When Sir Henry has a new play in hand, the study of his own part is merely one item in the labour of preparation. He reads every other part—reads and studies it—and forms his own idea as to the way it should be acted. He considers the play as a whole, then in detail, and scene by scene, and in his mind he has beheld it all enacted before the first rehearsal is called. All the real toil of rehearsing is his, and if his speech is sometimes acidulated his patience is inexhaustible. Hour after hour drags on, and the man who takes the whole burden upon his own shoulders is the only one who is never tired. When the players themselves have been rehearsed to death, Sir Henry's task is not much more than well in hand, Scenery, costumes, properties, music, are matters scarcely less important than the correct delivery of speeches and the management of scenes ; and if it be nothing graver than the size and shape of a footstool, the extent to which a door should stand open, or the position of a book on a table, the main source of inspiration is still Sir Henry himself. He knows instinctively what music will convey the apt suggestion in a particular scene, as he knows where a splash of colour in a costume is inharmonious ; and his skill in the disposition of lights is extraordinary. In a word, the last dress rehearsal leaves him still unsatisfied."

The one weak spot in Irving's management of the Lyceum has been, it seems to me, his neglect of the modern English drama. With the exception of adaptations by Mr. Wills and Mr. Herman Merivale, and trifles

by Mr. Pinero and Dr. Conan Doyle, the only original plays by English writers produced at the Lyceum during the reign of Irving have been *The Cup* and *Becket* by Tennyson, *King Arthur* by Mr. Comyns Carr, *Peter the Great* by Mr. Laurence Irving, and *The Medicine Man* by Messrs Traill and Hichens. The list is not a strong one, and it cannot be claimed for Irving that, much as he has done for the theatre, he has encouraged contemporary writers to produce plays worthy of the stage of Shakespeare's England. The experiments which he has made have not been altogether encouraging, but surely there are native dramatists amongst us who could have produced as good a play as *Robespierre*. Doubtless, however, Irving bethought him that the name of Sardou was one to conjure with, and the result has justified him to the full.

## CHAPTER XXX

### CONCLUSION

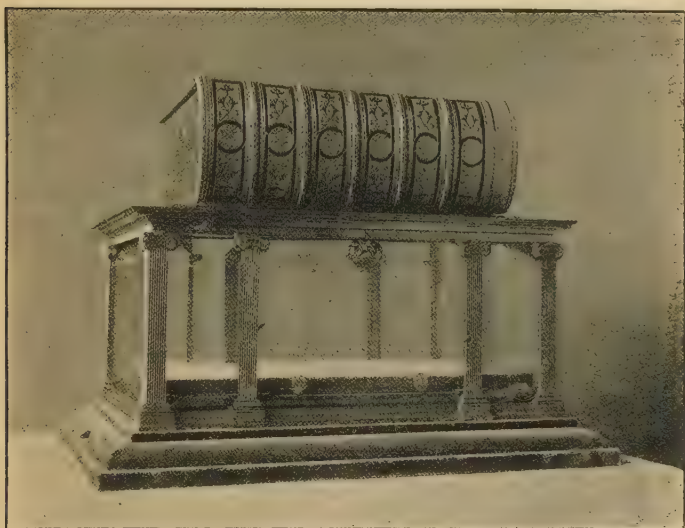
IRVING is the first English actor to take a leading place among the public men of the day. Some of his predecessors, it is true, have filled conspicuous places in the social life of their time; several have enjoyed the direct patronage of royalty and the friendship of great men; one, at least, is buried, under a monument ostentatious in its theatrical magnificence, amongst "our best and noblest" in Westminster Abbey; but not even Garrick occupied a position, outside his art, so conspicuous as that of Henry Irving. For all his memorable friendships, for all the petting and spoiling which were lavished upon him by the great, Garrick, to the end of his days, was regarded as a play-actor and little else. He was not even the undisputed head of his own profession, as is Irving at the present time. That he was the greatest English actor of his day, or, indeed, of any day, is hardly to be disputed; but he had powerful rivals and malignant detractors, in spite of the fact that, apart from the theatre, he was a man of considerable parts. The position of Irving is unique, and is likely to remain so.

There is no question that he owes his extraordinary triumph to a very remarkable combination of gifts. Together with urbanity and generosity, he possesses



indomitable perseverance, infinite patience, and inflexible will, as well as such exquisite tact as would have assured his success as a diplomatist. These qualities have enabled him to produce something like a revolution in the attitude of the English people towards the calling of the actor. There is a tendency, due in no small measure to Irving's influence, to elevate those who were once cruelly labelled rogues and vagabonds into a position which it is utterly unreasonable that they should occupy. It is much, doubtless, to represent a character with skill and intelligence, but it is little as compared with the creation of the character itself. That Irving is entirely sincere in the demands which he perpetually makes for the recognition of his profession, nobody will for an instant deny ; but those demands, when they are calmly examined, will be found extravagant. At the same time, it is impossible not to respect the man for making them. What a world of difference in this matter lies between Irving and Macready ! The former glories in the fact that he is a player ; the latter was outspoken in his contempt for his calling. And yet Macready, however "moral, grave, sublime" he may have been, was grudging in his recognition of the services of his fellow-actors, while the gratitude of Irving to his comrades is a matter of common knowledge. It is not wonderful that they should reciprocate that gratitude, nor that the profession at large should feel deeply indebted to a man who has done so much to better their fortunes and improve their social position. Immediately after Irving's knighthood was conferred upon him, four thousand members of the dramatic profession presented him with their signatures in a volume, which was en-

closed in a gold and crystal casket designed by Mr. Forbes Robertson. To a man such as Irving the presentation must have caused immense satisfaction. In returning thanks to the donors on the 19th of July, 1895, he used the words: "In the olden times our Britons showed their appreciation of a comrade by



*Photo. by F. A. Bridge.]*

CASKET DESIGNED BY FORBES ROBERTSON. PRESENTED TO HENRY IRVING  
TO COMMEMORATE THE KNIGHTHOOD CONFERRED UPON HIM.

lifting him upon their shields, and I cannot but feel, and feel it with unspeakable pride, that you, my brothers in our art, have lifted me on your shields." Congratulations poured in from all sides, and not from England only, for the members of the Comédie-Française sent him a letter expressing their unbounded

satisfaction that the Queen had recognized their craft by bestowing a title on its chief exponent in England.

The significance of Irving's knighthood has been most perfectly realized and most happily expressed by a French critic of our stage, M. Augustin Filon. "When this favour," he writes, "is bestowed on an official who has grown old in service, or on a major-general who can no longer mount a horse, the world takes no notice ; this everyday distinction dazzles only 'my lady's' dressmaker and the tradesmen with whom she deals. In Irving's case it is a historical occasion, an epoch-making event. He is the first actor to be invested with the emblem of rank. What is for him a reality is a possibility for every actor. Thus he has raised them in being raised above them."

The Irving knighthood may prove to be the thin end of the wedge. We have already the poet-peer, the painter-peer, the medical peer, the scientific peer ; the next thing may be the actor-peer.

It says much for Irving's sagacity that his public appearances are always successful. Whether he is lecturing before the University of Oxford, presiding at a charity dinner, laying a foundation stone, or opening a bazaar, he invariably does the thing with dignity, grace, and distinction. Without being an orator, his speeches are at all times suited to their purpose, and contain felicities of phrase and touches of humour which give them a distinct character of their own. Above all, they have on them the unmistakable stamp of sincerity. In his more ambitious addresses he ventures only to talk of the things which he knows and about which he is enthusiastic. To the students of Harvard he spoke of the Art of Acting ; at Oxford



HAIL! SIR HENRY IRVING.

"In the olden times our Britons showed their appreciation of a comrade by lifting him upon their shields, and I cannot but feel, and feel it with an unspeakable pride, that you, my brothers in our Art, have lifted me on your shields."

*Sir Henry Irving to his Brother and Sister Actors, on July 19, 1895*

CARTOON BY ALFRED BRYAN. FROM "THE ENTR'ACTE," JULY 25TH, 1895.

he discoursed of Burbage and Betterton, of Garrick and Kean; while at Edinburgh he dealt with the

Present State of the Stage. Under these circumstances he is worth listening to, and, while one may dispute his conclusions, it is difficult not to admire the moderation with which he states them. It is not at the theatre alone that one is affected by his magnetic personality and falls under the spell of his picturesqueness; one feels these things even in the cold atmosphere of the lecture-room.

Of Irving's liberality to those who have grown old in the service of the Stage and have fallen upon evil days there are countless anecdotes, which, if not true in detail, are assuredly true in substance. According to one story, the Lyceum company some years ago included seven veterans who were unable to do anything but carry banners and the like, and who were nevertheless remunerated as if they had been in the heyday of their powers. When two other distressed cases were made known to Irving, he engaged the old actors as *understudies* to their brothers in adversity. Again, not a few of his old companions at Sunderland, Edinburgh, and Manchester have been included in the ranks of the Lyceum, and have been paid well for doing nothing in particular. The theatrical charities have ever had in Irving their most valiant supporter and their most persuasive advocate.

Is Irving a great actor? Is his place with Macready or with Charles Kean? Are his mannerisms, his physical limitations, sufficient seriously to impair the effect of his great intellectuality, his wonderful originality, his invariable power of fascination? To argue these questions at length is outside the scope of this book, but there are some considerations with which I think I may fitly conclude it. Assuredly no famous

English actor has been more vehemently applauded than Henry Irving, and not one has been more vigorously denounced. When he made his first successes, those whom he failed to please declared that he was not a fixed star, but a comet. Then, somewhat later, he was called, in no complimentary spirit, a "fashionable tragedian." Time, it was said, would find him out, and his worshippers would soon betake themselves to other shrines. The prophets were wrong. The fashion commenced a quarter of a century ago and it is still at its height. It is noticeable, moreover, that, though there are still anti-Irvingites, "the Irvingites," to use the phrase of Mr. Frederic Whyte in his *Actors of the Century*, "are in power, and the Opposition is weakening and dwindling year by year."

Again, the adherents of Irving do not belong to any one section of play-goers. He is not the favourite actor of the cultured few nor the thoughtless many. He appeals to all classes of play-goers in all kinds of places. He attracts those of the East End as he attracts those of the West, and his popularity is as great in the western cities of the United States as it is throughout this kingdom. The future will, of necessity, take into consideration the enormous area as well as the continuity of his popularity.

But it will be said that the future will take more account of the opinion of the expert critic than of the horde of theatre-goers. We judge our old actors by the opinions of Lamb and Hazlitt, and not by the box-office receipts. The theatrical critic of the future, when he is face to face with the whole mass of Irvingiana (if, indeed, any man live long enough to be in such a position), will be in a state of pathetic



bewilderment. One's imagination reels at the thought of the appalling conflict of testimony with which he will have to deal. Will he rely upon the prophecy of Dickens, upon the praise of Tennyson, Browning, Gladstone, Coleridge, Lytton, and other men variously great? Will he be influenced by the fact that in 1866 George Henry Lewes remarked to George Eliot that in twenty years Irving would be at the head of the English Stage, and that she, the greatest woman writer of her time, replied, "He is there, I think, already"? Or will he go to the professional newspaper critics, and out of the multitude of their differing verdicts seek the truth? In whatever way he proceeds, it seems to me he cannot fail to come to the conclusion that Henry Irving was the greatest English actor of his time. When we remember his Iago, his Benedick, his Shylock, his Charles I., his Becket, we have little reason to be sorry that our era of play-going was the era of Irving.



## APPENDIX

### LIST OF PARTS PLAYED BY HENRY IRVING IN LONDON, WITH DATES OF FIRST PER- FORMANCES.

The following list is believed to be complete, with the exception of parts played during brief engagements at the Surrey Theatre and the Princess's Theatre in 1859, and at a few benefit performances. Original parts are marked with an asterisk, and when the name of the author is given it is placed after the title in parentheses.

#### ST. JAMES'S THEATRE.

- |       |          |   |
|-------|----------|---|
| 1866. | Oct. 6.  | DORICOURT in "The Belle's Stratagem" (Mrs. Cowley).       |
| "     | Nov. 5.  | RAWDON SCUDAMORE* in "Hunted Down" (Boucicault).          |
| 1867. | Feb. 9.  | HARRY DORNTON in "The Road to Ruin" (Holcroft).           |
| "     | Mar. 2.  | THE O'HOOOLIGAN* in "A Rapid Thaw" (T. W. Robertson).     |
| "     | " 19.    | JOSEPH SURFACE in "The School for Scandal."               |
| "     | " 26.    | ROBERT MACAIRE in the play of that name.                  |
| "     | Apl. 22. | COUNT FALCON* in "Idalia" (George Roberts).               |
| "     | May 27.  | CHARLES ARUNDELL in "My Aunt's Advice."                   |
| "     | June 1.  | ROBERT AUDLEY in "Lady Audley's Secret" (George Roberts). |
| "     | " 8.     | CHARLES TORRENS in "The Serious Family."                  |

1867. Oct. 16. HARRY THORNCOTE in "Only a Clod"  
(Palgrave Simpson).  
 " " " FELIX FEATHERLEY in "The Widow Hunt"  
(Stirling Coyne).  
 " Nov. 4. CHARLES MOWERAY \* in "A Story of Procida."  
 " " 20. FERMENT in "The School for Reform"  
(Thomas Morton).

### QUEEN'S THEATRE, LONG ACRE.

1867. Dec. 26. PETRUCHIO in "Katherine and Petruchio"  
(Garriek's version of "The Taming of the  
Shrew").  
 1868. Jan. 8. BOB GASSITT \* in "Dearer than Life" (H. J.  
Byron).  
 " Apl. 11. BILL SYKES \* in "Oliver Twist" (John Oxen-  
ford).  
 " June 1. CHARLES SURFACE in "The School for  
Scandal."

### HAYMARKET THEATRE.

1868. June 5. COOL in "London Assurance" (Boucicault).

### QUEEN'S THEATRE.

1868. July 8. FAULKLAND in "The Rivals."  
 " " 24. ROBERT REDBURN \* in "The Lancashire Lass"  
(H. J. Byron).  
 1869. Feb. 13. ROBERT ARNOLD \* in "Not Guilty" (Watts  
Phillips).

### DRURY LANE.

1869. Mar. 11. BROWN in "The Spitalfields Weaver."  
(Benefit for sufferers through the fire at  
the Theatre Royal, Hull.)

## QUEEN'S THEATRE.

1869. Mar. 15. YOUNG MARLOW in "She Stoops to Conquer."  
 " " 19. HENRI DE NEUVILLE in "Plot and Passion"  
 (Tom Taylor).

(During his engagement here Irving also played VICTOR DUBOIS in "Ici on Parle Français" and JOHN PEERY-BINGLE in "Dot.")

## HAYMARKET THEATRE.

1869. July 12. ROBERT FITZHUBERT \* in "All for Money"  
 (Miss Le Thiere).

## DRURY LANE.

1869. Aug. 5. COMPTON KERR \* in "Formosa" (Dion Boucicault).

## GAIETY THÉÂTRE.

1869. Dec. 13. MR. CHENEVIX \* in "Uncle Dick's Darling"  
 (H. J. Byron).

## VAUDEVILLE THEATRE.

1870. Apl. 16. ALFRED SKIMMINGTON \* in "For Love or Money" (Andrew Halliday).  
 " June 4. DIGBY GRANT \* in "Two Roses" (James Albery).

(During his engagement at this theatre Irving also played FRANK FRISKLY in "Boots at the Swan" and COLONEL KIRKE in "A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing.")

## LYCEUM THEATRE.

1871. Sept. 11. LANDRY BARBEAU \* in "Fanchette" (Mrs. Bateman).  
 „ Oct. 23. JINGLE \* in "Pickwick" (James Albery).  
 „ Nov. 25. MATHIAS \* in "The Bells" (Leopold Lewis).  
 1872. Apl. 1. JEREMY DIDDLE in "Raising the Wind" (James Kenney).  
 „ Sept. 28. CHARLES I.\* in "Charles the First" (W. G. Wills).  
 1873. Apl. 19. EUGENE ARAM \* in "The Fate of Eugene Aram" (W. G. Wills).  
 „ Sept. 27. RICHELIEU in Lytton's play of that name.  
 1874. Feb. 7. COUNT PHILIP DE MIRAFLORE \* in "Philip" (Hamilton Aïdé).  
 „ Oct. 31. HAMLET.  
 1875. Sept. 18. MACBETH.  
 1876. Feb. 14. OTHELLO.  
 „ Apl. 18. PHILIP OF SPAIN \* in "Queen Mary" (Tennyson).

## DRURY LANE.

1876. June 8. JOSEPH SURFACE in "The School for Scandal."  
 (See above, Queen's Theatre, Mar. 19, 1867.)

## LYCEUM THEATRE.

1876. June 12. DORICOURT in "The Belle's Stratagem. (See above, St. James's Theatre, Oct. 6, 1866.)  
 „ „ 23. COUNT TRISTAN in "King René's Daughter."  
 1877. Jan. 29. RICHARD III.  
 „ May 19. LESURQUES and DUBOSC in "The Lyons Mail" (Charles Reade).  
 1878. Mar. 9. LOUIS XI. in "Louis XI." (Casimir Delavigne).

1878. June 8. VANDERDECKEN in "Vanderdecken" (Percy Fitzgerald and W. G. Wills).
1879. Apl. 17. CLAUDE MELNOTTE in "The Lady of Lyons" (Lytton).
- „ Sept. 27. SIR EDWARD MORTIMER in "The Iron Chest" (Colman the younger).
- „ Nov. 1. SHYLOCK.
1880. May 20. COUNT TRISTAN\* in "Iolanthe" (W. G. Wills).
- „ Sept. 18. THE TWO DEI FRANCHI in "The Corsican Brothers" (Dion Boucicault).
1881. Jan. 3. SYNORIX\* in "The Cup" (Tennyson).
- „ May 2. IAGO.
- „ July 23. MODUS in Scenes from "The Hunchback."
1882. Mar. 8. ROMEO.
- „ Oct. 11. BENEDICK.
1884. July 8. MALVOLIO.
1885. May 28. DR. PRIMROSE in "Olivia" (W. G. Wills).
- „ Dec. 19. MEPHISTOPHELES\* in "Faust" (W. G. Wills).
1887. July 1. WERNER in Byron's play of that name.
1889. Sept. 28. ROBERT LANDRY in "The Dead Heart" (Watts Phillips).
1890. Sept. 20. RAVENSWOOD\* in Herman Merivale's play of that name.
1892. Jan. 5. HENRY VIII.
- „ Nov. 10. KING LEAR.
1893. Feb. 6. BECKET\* in Tennyson's play of that name.

## GARRICK THEATRE.

1894. Dec. 17. CORPORAL GREGORY BREWSTER\* in "A Story of Waterloo" (Conan Doyle).
- (First played at the Prince's Theatre, Bristol, Sept. 21, 1894.)

## LYCEUM THEATRE.

1895. Jan. 12. KING ARTHUR\* in Comyns Carr's play of that name.

1895. May 4. DON QUIXOTE \* in "A Chapter from Don Quixote" (W. G. Wills).
1896. Sept. 22. IACHIMO in "Cymbeline."
1897. Apl. 10. NAPOLEON \* in "Madame Sans-Gêne" (Sardou).
1898. Jan. 1. PETER THE GREAT \* in Laurence Irving's play of that name.
- ., May 4. DR. TREGENNA \* in "The Medicine Man" (H. D. Traill and Robert Hichens).
1899. Apl. 15. ROBESPIERRE \* in Sardou's play of that name.

## INDEX OF PLAYS

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